A Gallery

Philip Guedalla

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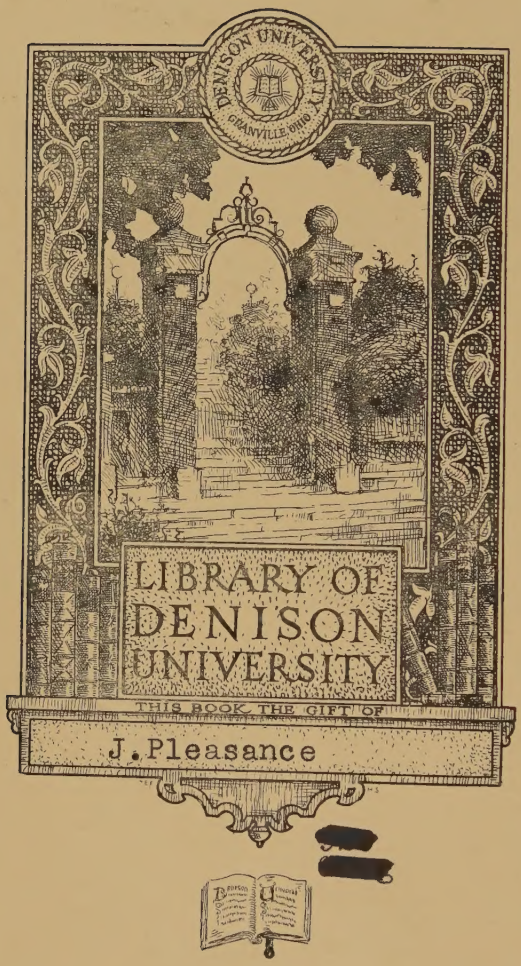
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A GALLERY

A GALLERY

BY

PHILIP GUEDALLA

And with choice paintings of wise
men I hung
The royal dais round.

THE PALACE OF ART

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1924

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NOTE

This series of studies was designed for the present volume. But before its parts were assembled, some of them found temporary homes, for which I am indebted, in The London Mercury, The Winter Owl, The New Statesman, The Illustrated London News, Vanity Fair (*New York*), The Daily News, Daily Mail, *and* Weekly Westminster.

P. G.

A PREFACE

At a time when the threatened export of a single picture suffices to throw patriots into a fever, it may seem injudicious to ship an entire gallery. Yet the cargo, when once it has paid duty and passed the Customs, may be of interest in another Continent. For the landscapes are African or European; and the portraits have all been chosen from that impressive row of persons, whose literary reputations are international, or from the narrower range of politicians, who constitute "England" in the international sphere. And, unlike most modern exhibitions, the gallery contains no "Portrait of the Artist."

PHILIP GUEDALLA

LONDON
April, 1924

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LANDSCAPES

Fez
Biarritz
Mequinez
Kirriemuir
Mandalay

FEZ

SOMEWHERE in the town a drum was throbbing. The little pulse of sound seemed to go straight up in the silence over the city, like a tall thread of wood smoke into a windless sky. But all round the great place lay out in the still sunshine; and the grey hills, where the olive-trees climb up into the Middle Atlas, looked down on Fez. There is something a little alarming about a city without a sound. When one stands above a town in the West, there is always a striking of clocks, a dull thunder of wheels, or the sudden yell of an engine. But down in the little streets, which wind through Fez, there is no traffic beyond men on foot and sheeted women and the faint click of ambling mules and little donkeys that brush their loads against the walls on either side. That is why scarcely a sound drifts up, as you look out across the city.

It is a grey, congested heap of square-topped houses, filling a whole valley, climbing the little hills, and huddled behind the shelter of the city walls. Tall towers stand up out of the mass, where the *muezzin*

goes up between the city and the sky to quaver out the hours of prayer; and beyond the minarets one catches the sudden green of a great roof of tiles. But the memory that will remain is of a heaped, grey waste of houses lying silent in the sun. As one stared, it seemed to stare silently back; and somewhere in the town a solitary drum was throbbing.

The little alleys wind in and out among the houses. Sometimes they vanish into tunnels under the piled city, or pick their way across the chessboard shadows of a reed-roofed market. The blue sky comes suddenly round corners, and swarming streets end in the little hill-streams which pour through Fez. There is a sound of rushing water everywhere in the city. It goes whispering under humped Moorish bridges and mutters like a stage conspirator in little strangled tunnels below the heaped grey houses. The great town had seemed so silent from the hills above. But down in the maze, where the veiled women slip discreetly by in the half-darkness of the streets, it is alive with little sounds. Whispering water, the slow lilt of men at work, snatches of high, wailing, minor plainsong (Spain learnt its music at the knees of Africa), low chants from little schools, the tapping hammers of the coppersmiths, are all caught between the tall blind walls; and the hooded men crouch talking at every corner. The men and the water all talk

low. Perhaps that is how Fez muttered ten years ago, before it came yelling down the little streets to murder stray, bewildered Frenchmen in the massacres. In Fez one can never quite forget that spring.

But one day the grey city made remarkable holiday. It shut up shop in the early afternoon and went pouring westward up the hill in its best kaleidoscopic clothes. The tide of traffic set steadily towards the Palace gates. Soldiers, great droves of women, elegant young gentlemen on mules streamed up the little alleys, as tall negroes went elbowing through the press; and solemn citizens, who lie all day in little cupboards three feet square to sell a pinch of green tea for a copper and an hour's conversation, abandoned the excitements of commerce for the keener joys of spectacle. His Shereefian Majesty was on the road from Rabat; and was it not fitting that his city of Fez should receive the Sultan at the gates? From the great square before the Palace there was a steady roar, and the gorged streets still poured late-comers into the mass. They stood and pushed and shouted; and sometimes, discarding all false dignity, they swept through the crowd, fifteen abreast, arms linked, knees up, and singing to the steady thunder of their little earthenware drums. Above and behind them were the gates whose great square battlements had so alarmed the romantic imagination of M. Pierre Loti;

and somewhere in the middle loud arguments and a faint gleam of bayonets indicated that anxious French officers still hoped to keep a road open for the procession.

Royalty was late. But Fez resorted freely to the consolations of song and dance. Rings formed in the crowd; and the little drums throbbed without ceasing, as indomitable loyalists jigged steadily up and down in line, and hillmen in circles sang interminable choruses. Then a gun spoke from the green fort beyond the town, and the heads all turned to the roadway between the bayonets.

There was something odd about that procession from the first. It opened with four closed cars, which glided in perfect silence and with drawn blinds up to the Palace. There was a roguish intimation that these contained a selection of the Imperial harem; and we gathered from the small number that Majesty was making only a short stay in Fez. Followed four open cabs, containing (one heard it with a mild thrill) the Keepers of the Door, come straight from the Arabian Nights to guard the Sultan's harem. The misleading art of Ballet had taught one to believe that these figures of romance would wear a vivacious, almost a festal air; and to the heated Western imagination those four cab-loads of dejected men in pointed red fezzes were a bitter blow. The Sultan of

Morocco seemed to have neglected the opportunities afforded to him by M. Bakst. Eunuchs in cabs. . . . One waited gloomily to see a station-omnibus full of mutes with bow-strings. But the salutes were still thudding from the battery on the hill, and the infantry in the road sprang suddenly to the "Present." There was a clatter of horses under the great gates; and a stream of men in white went riding by with long five-foot flint-locks from the Sûs, sitting the great coloured saddles stiffly with feet driven well home into their square stirrups.

Then the colours changed, and negro lancers jingled past in red. Pennons, black faces, scarlet tunics took the procession to the border-line of opera. There was a pause; and a band launched into the ceremonial discords that are reserved for royal ears. The crowd was roaring in the square; and when it paused for breath, the shrill *you-you-you,* which squeals for victory or drives men on to kill, came from the women in their corner. The French guns spoke slowly from the battery; and down in the road, at the centre of the din, a grave bundle of white linen moved deliberately through the noise and watched with unseeing eyes the prostrations of anxious Kaids. For the Sultan had come into his city of Fez.

BIARRITZ

1856

In the days when regimental bands reverently played *Partant pour la Syrie* and a frivolous generation believed the ancients to be lightly-clad individuals who used Empire furniture and sang the delightful airs of M. Offenbach, the Villa Eugénie stood on the little slope by the lighthouse. There was a sentry-box at the corner from which the *piou-piou,* in the intervals of presenting arms to his Imperial master, could watch the big waves breaking on the brown rocks beyond the harbour; and a red roof sheltered, with suitable dignity, the *villeggiatura* of the dynasty.

They had come down overnight from Paris, just like anybody else. But the train was a marvel of mechanical ingenuity. There was positively a passage—*un pont suspendu*—between the coaches; and whilst the intrepid engine-driver maintained a dizzy speed in the darkness, they walked in to dinner as though they had all been at the Tuileries. Perhaps

the table was a trifle narrow; and the short gentleman with a large waxed moustache, who sat at one corner, had only just enough room for his plate. But it was a silver plate. And everyone ate cold bird and talked at the top of their voices, until the ladies retired. Then the short gentleman lit a cigarette and invited the others to smoke their segars. Later on he walked down the train to a saloon; and the rest, adopting peculiar travelling-caps, settled down for the night in the upholstered, but still angular, corners of arm-chairs. In the dark hours a lovely lady with sloping eyebrows stood and smiled at them through a glass door. It was not the sad, perpetual smile of ceremony, but a laughing smile; since she had come along the train on purpose to laugh at them all asleep. They stumbled to their feet with sleepy courtesy; and as she walked back to her saloon, she warned them archly that they must not return the compliment—*les représailles n'étaient pas permises.*

The rest of the night passed somehow; and on the next evening they were all by the sea-side at the Villa Eugénie. Sometimes they drove; sometimes (under medical advice) they bathed; sometimes they suffered agonies of *mal de mer* in little boats. In the morning they strolled on the terrace under the anxious observation of stern policemen in vast top-hats and long frock-coats; and in the evenings they sat in the Villa

whilst the Emperor read aloud to them—he was sometimes very comical and said things which the author had not written at all. That was not the year when Mr. Home, the gifted medium, thrilled them all so much; and their entertainments lacked any supernatural aid. Sometimes there was a little dance, and the quadrille vied with the *Boulangère* and the *Carillon de Dunkerque* for their delight. One night the Emperor, with all his decorations on, sang them a solo; and once or twice they all tried to convince the little doctor that tables turned because of spirits or the electric fluid. But the best of all was when a smiling lady, after her bathe, walked in the sunshine on the sands. She had dressed in a little tent, and then—*l'Impératrice se promène sur la plage en robe blanche.* . . . The sunshine of 1856 has faded, and her sands are a common playground. But sometimes, perhaps, when a slow moon comes up over the Bay and the pale waves ride silently to shore, *l'Impératrice se promène sur la plage en robe blanche.*

1892

The big Biscayan rollers pounded the coast with the relentless action of a bad public speaker with a single point. They came on from America in long lines; and they swept over the broken sandstone reefs like a Cabinet minister over an interruption. Some-

times they went up in white Gothic spires under the pale winter sunshine; and sometimes they streamed off a rock in thick green stalactites. But there was a monotony about their attack. They insisted; they restated with added emphasis; they put their point in long, sonorous undulations. Once or twice, as the land-wind caught their crests, they almost seemed to fling back a white head and deal magisterially with an interrupter. They really behaved (perhaps it was a compliment to his presence on the coast) surprisingly like Mr. Gladstone.

The party were all at the large, comfortable hotel at the corner by the dressmaker's. One could rely on Mr. Armitstead for that. Mr. G. had gone for a walk with the British Consul; and it was to be feared that he was quoting Homer. By lunch-time they were all quoting hard; Mr. Morley quoted Aristotle, and his leader quoted the Bible. Before the visit was out, they had quoted Goethe, Manzoni, Milton and Dr. Döllinger; they read Max Müller and argued about the payment of Members. There was something inexpressibly odd about this bevy of English Liberals transported to the Bay of Biscay. They sat in full view of the Pyrenees and talked about Sir Robert Peel. They went to Bayonne in trams and talked about Lord Spencer. They went to Fuenterrabia by train and talked (perhaps it was a tribute to

the influence of the rococo church) of Mr. Disraeli. There were no limits to their erudition. They quoted Scaliger; they compared Virgil with Lucretius; and "Persius was spoken of highly." One is left wondering how many of our present masters could speak of Persius highly. Yet there was Mr. Gladstone, in the intervals of backgammon with Mr. Armitstead, defending the Second Aeneid against the critical onslaughts of his Chief Secretary. They may not have solved the Irish Question in 1892: but at least they could read and write.

Something between a force of nature and a Minor Prophet, the last but two of Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers went for little walks in those astonishing capes with which Mrs. Gladstone tested the faith of nervous Liberals, or kept his room on the occasion of that disastrous "surfeit of wild strawberries" (for even Minor Prophets have their limitations at eighty-two), when he was just strong enough to receive Mr. Morley in a dressing-gown and discuss Burke and Marie Antoinette. The big hills stared solemnly across the Bay; and anxious Englishmen in bowler-hats argued about Irish finance. Once (happy day) they saw some fellow-countrymen in pink coats hunting foxes near St. Jean de Luz. And one day they drafted answers to the most important of Mr. G.'s birthday telegrams; there was one—very gracious—

from the Prince and Princess of Wales, and such a nice one from the assistants at Marshall and Snelgrove's. So the bright winter days went on, as though the Rue Mazagran were Downing Street. They had brought an authentic air of Hawarden with them. Their thoughts were mainly of Homer and Mr. Parnell; their relaxations (in the absence of trees to fell) were strictly literary; and one feels that it was only by the exercise of strong repression that there were no little speeches on the platform, as their train went through Bordeaux and Dax. But it was all a great success; and Mrs. Gladstone got some silver for her birthday, and Mr. Armitstead died a Peer.

MEQUINEZ

No one, it would seem, has fairly estimated the indebtedness of architecture to lunatics. Most palaces and several towns owe their present form to the dementia of royal persons; but the obligation, so far as one can judge from the forbidding sanatoria which decorate the main railway approaches to London, has been repaid in the most niggardly fashion. Architecture has not yet discharged its debt to madness, although in some of its latest manifestations there is ground for hope that the time is not far distant. Perhaps all builders are a little mad. There is inevitably something rather inhuman in their strange passion for permanence; and if one goes among the makers of great buildings—Cheops, Caracalla, Louis XIV., Mr. Jabez Balfour—one must expect to keep queer company. But there is none madder than the mad old man who is to be met behind a great gate in Mequinez. The comforting words of the Prophet traverse it in curly black letters, and its green tiles take the evening sun and turn to a dull blaze of gold.

There is an opulence about the Bab Mansour that is more than Moroccan, that is almost Indian, in the spread of its colours and the reticulated wealth of its inlay. But, beyond it, is a queer waste of ruins, of crumbling arches, of flaked and corrupting walls, where a strange old man once sat among the builders and watched his Palace mounting. It is a shoddy ruin that moulders round the green grass of Mequinez. There is something ignoble about the decay of cheap constructions, and one is less impressed than saddened by the sight: Macaulay's New Zealander will know the feeling.

The supreme bitterness of it is that the old man lived for his buildings. Slave labour, great Roman columns, the revenues of Morocco, and Christian prisoners taken under every flag by the Sallee pirates were all poured into the work; and Mulai Ismail crouched in the shade, as the stones swung into place. Sometimes he worked in the long line of chanting slaves or ate his *cousscouss* among the brick-heaps. That Sultan, with his women and his negro guard and his seven hundred sons, was a singular intrusion of the fabulous East into the polite age of Louis XIV. The two of them were palace-builders. But while fine ladies were admiring the elegant proportions of Versailles, far away to the South Mulai Ismail was riding out under his new arches to keep

order in Morocco. He kept it with a black army, a strict adherence to the Word, and a personal aptitude for killing which rose to strange heights of homicidal virtuosity. But they said, whilst he reigned in Mequinez, that a woman or a Jew could travel without fear from Oudjda to Taroudant. The fierce patriarchal old man seemed to have lingered on in the world from the Crusades. Yet whilst he lived in a region that lay somewhere between the Book of Joshua and the Arabian Nights, bold engravers in Paris were essaying his portrait—*Roy de Maroc, Fez, Tafilet et Autres Provinces, Ports, et Villes Maritimes dans la Mauritanie en Affrique*—and Europe looked on with round eyes at the Sultan, who had put the English out of Tangier. A nervous gentleman from Versailles counted, during a mission of three weeks, forty-seven decapitations by the sovereign to whom he was accredited; and the embarrassed Consul at Sallee informed his blushing Government that the blood royal of Morocco had received thirty-five additions in forty days. Yet this indomitable fragment of Oriental mythology lived in intermittent contact with the world of Saint-Simon and Mr. Pepys. With a strange access of gallantry the old man once addressed to Versailles a polite application for the addition of a French princess to his collection, which was already extensive. His request was not

inspired by that spirit of wanton connoisseurship in which his successors have imported bicycles and gramophones, but by grave motives of policy. Versailles was mildly entertained; but there is no record of the feelings of the little palace-builder in the tall peruke when the request arrived. All that is known is that he disappointed his brother of Morocco; and the Princesse de Conti never rode over the hills and down the long road from the sea to Mequinez.

But his great achievement was theological. In the late years of the Seventeenth Century it came to the interested ears of the old Sultan that a dismal King of England was living at Saint-Germain. His misfortunes, it seemed, were attributable to his religious opinions; and with the ready tactlessness of a born missionary Mulai Ismail hastened to correct them. The fierce old man prepared to rejoice Islam with the conversion of James II. This praiseworthy effort was confided to an admirable letter with a gilt border and a large gold seal. It opened with an encouraging reference to the divine inspiration of Charles II., whose evacuation of Tangier was bravely attributed to his conviction of the spiritual superiority of Islam. His brother was incited by this shining example of Moslem piety in the House of Stuart to consider favourably the revelation of Mahomet. Feeling that his reader might hesitate to demean the

royal dignity by a conversion, the eager old missionary at Mequinez hopefully adduced the examples of the Negus of Abyssinia and the Emperor Heraclius. The dismal pietist in black velvet at Saint-Germain might surely be persuaded by a letter from Mulai Ismail, if the great Emperor at Byzantium had once respected a letter from the Prophet, a letter which (Islam believed the tale) was carefully kept in a gold casket and had passed from Rome in its decline to France, and was now the talisman of French success under Louis XIV.

The argument proceeded gravely with a wealth of learning. A crowded programme for the Day of Judgment was indicated in lively detail; and the King's taste for Popish idols was gravely reprobated by the austere Moslem. He was urged, in default of a conversion to Islam, to revert to the simpler Protestant beliefs of "the sect of Henric" and to accept the generous aid of a Moorish army, which would raise the green standard on the English coast and restore him, by the grace of Mulai Ismail, to his throne. Dutch kings were distasteful to the sovereign of the Sallee pirates. But James never saw the joke: monarchs in exile rarely do.

KIRRIEMUIR

In the first place, of course, Queen Anne was to blame. It was a direct consequence of one of the few legislative indiscretions of that blameless reign. You have only to read the preamble (it fills a trifle under nine pages in the "Statutes at Large") of "an Act for the Union of the two Kingdoms of *England* and *Scotland*" to detect, beneath an apparently harmless drone of formal legislation, the beginnings of the trouble. The grave words, in their dignified context on the yellow page, seem meaningless enough. The Augustan drafting committee, in their high heels and their tall perukes, may have meant no harm. But behind their empty periods one seems to catch a sudden, disconcerting glint of red hair, of eager, determined eyes, of the slow gathering of the clans for that last and most successful foray over the Border into the defenceless English counties. The Act of Union (one can read it in every line) prepared the pervasion of English life by Scotsmen.

So, in the first instance, Queen Anne was to blame. But she has an obvious excuse, because her claim to

the customary indulgence *de mortuis* is, if anything, a trifle stronger than most people's. In any case the pass which she had sold to the invader was not seriously congested by south-bound traffic during the Eighteenth Century. Such incursions as were organised (under the auspices of the House of Stuart) were firmly thrown back into Scotland, the form assumed by English criticism being normally a row of spikes over a gateway for the reception of Scottish heads. And even when the drastic immigration policy of this more than Ellis Island was eluded by the furtive entry of individual Scotsmen, England continued to regard them with unconcealed distaste. They grossly mispronounced the language; their country was known to be of a grotesque and barbarous poverty; and they were not even foreigners. One might tolerate the presence in a polite circle of a dapper Mounseer or a learned German; but the constant company of a Scotsman was something that only the massive patience of the Doctor could bear—and even that had been known to give way on occasion.

For that reason one read with a thrill of mild surprise the astonishing claim of a Scots Rector at St. Andrews. He was addressing a passionately local audience in the full intellectual idiom of the Gael. There was a copious appeal to that light, unearthly

fancy of which a monopoly is supposed to reside in the untidier portions of the Celtic fringe; the names of local worthies—Montrose, M'Connachie, Hamilton—abounded in provincial profusion; and there was that mild sprinkling of Scottish colloquialisms—"fleggit" and "flichtered"—which is always intended to put the Englishman off his sentence. But in the midst of it all, among the little nudging references and the persevering elfishness and the light brush of sentiment that is like the soft sweep of showers among Northern hills, there came the astounding phrase, "our glorious Johnson." One hardly dares to conjecture what was said in Elysium that afternoon under the tree where so many of them always gather for polite conversation—Mr. Garrick and Mr. Wilkes and Mr. Topham Beauclerk and Sir Joshua and Mr. Boswell, who takes no more little notes now because his memory is perfect at last. It was in May that the dreadful words were spoken at St. Andrews; and that May there was thunder from a clear sky. "Our glorious Johnson". . . Scottish acquisitiveness could surely go no further.

The embargo on Scotsmen lasted and almost survived the Eighteenth Century. The long reign of Sir Walter did something to lift the ban. But the majority of his countrymen were found to be lamentably unlike him; and the repulsive dialect in which

Mr. Carlyle elected to commune with his Maker in the presence of his startled readers did much to restore the old attitude of exclusion. The popularity of Scotland was long delayed. Late in the reign of Queen Victoria, when Mr. Meredith had exposed to the full the feelings of a perfect gentleman and Mr. Henry James had explored the furthest recesses of refined persons, there came a sudden interest in the simpler ornaments of the British countryside. Young ladies in circulating libraries went tripping westward with Mr. Hardy, went further west with Mr. William Black. Every county (in some parts of the country the industry has survived into our own time) was found to be good for at least one novel. The Muse of fiction was hastily fitted for a sunbonnet; bare arms replaced the naked souls of an earlier fashion, whilst eager literary hands substituted the cow-shed for the drawing-room. Somewhere between the milk-pails and the *patois,* a Scottish vogue crept in; the sentiment of peasant characters could be relied on to be sound; and the close proximity of Balmoral seemed almost to give royal sanction to the vogue.

England turned a patient ear to interminable narratives of the slow journey of small-holders from the cradle to the grave; and their conversation was couched in an alarming idiom, in which the wildest

misprints were barely noticeable. Somewhere in this strange movement Mr. Barrie had his beginnings. His work displayed a welcome brevity, and there was a pleasing play of mild sentiment. But he was far as yet, whilst his imagination still hung round Kirriemuir, from Baronetcy and the still more select company of the Order of Merit. Those bright perspectives did not beckon, until he had transferred himself from the publisher's waiting-room to the stage door. In his first phase Mr. Barrie was only one writer among several, a friend of Henley, a delicate *staccato* little pen from Scotland. But his second career, among the draughts and bouquets of the London theatre, took him much further.

"Very soon," as he once told some undergraduates, "you will be Victorian or that sort of thing yourselves; next session probably, when the freshmen come up." As a dramatist Sir James Barrie is (one says it without disparagement of a great age) essentially Edwardian. It is true that he produced two plays before Queen Victoria died; and his ennoblement was at the hands of King George. But the great mass of his dramatic work, the first sustained roar of public appreciation, whose echoes reverberate annually in the ritual revival of a children's play, all fall within the reign of King Edward VII. One year of it alone saw him launch three

new plays; and very soon that small, unobtrusive figure with a large pipe (one knew so little about him, except that he smoked too much) had unintentionally elbowed his competitors into obscurity at the side of the stage. He became the anointed king of the English theatre; although for the most part he was, like that elusive figure of Mr. H. G. Wells' theology, an invisible king. It was a queer apotheosis.

His appeal to the age of King Edward was almost irresistible. It was a slightly jaded time, when the public taste turned wearily in the direction of a sweet, an almost too sweet simplicity. The fevered, *fin de siècle* young gentlemen of the Yellow Book had given it all the sensations; the facile worldliness of Mr. Pinero and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones had taught it all that could be known about life. It had exhausted the possibilities of chrysoprase and hermaphrodites; and it had seen every permutation of two men and a woman. The subjects of Edward VII., like the languid courtiers of Louis XVI., were ready for buttercups and green fields; and with a charming gesture Mr. Barrie conducted them to their Trianon, to play at shepherds in the sunshine. The island of *The Admirable Crichton* became their *Robinson;* and his author was the little Rousseau of a new return to nature.

That is really how one sees Mr. Barrie's triumphant advent to the English stage. At any other time those tender demonstrations that wives are frequently fond of their own husbands, that fathers feel a distinct preference for their sons, might strike one as a trifle obvious. But to the hearing of Edwardian audiences these revelations had a strange ring of novelty: for them the platitude was invested with all the dignity of a paradox. It must have been infinitely refreshing to see wives strike out boldly for themselves and stay at home, instead of obeying convention and trotting demurely off in pursuit of another gentleman. It was, if one had learnt about women from Mr. Pinero, a new idea; and Mr. Barrie obtained full credit for his discovery.

But that charm was bound to fade. All that remains for a later generation is the quality of Sir James Barrie's imagination. That little twist of fancy may seem a small thing. But it has attained to the dangerous dignity of a national institution. Statues are erected to it in open spaces, and reference to it is frequent in public speeches—even in his own. With rare helpfulness he has explored his own elusive quality and returned from the expedition with the unsatisfying announcement that it was all M'Connachie. He, we are told, "is the one who writes the plays," who "prefers to fly around on one

wing," who draws the crowds which erroneously applaud Sir James Barrie. But that does not get one much further. One had apprehended, even before the Rector's obliging self-analysis at St. Andrews, that he had an imagination and that its workings were (like other people's) distinct from the more commonplace operations of his mind. Most of us could see that there was more fancy in it than in the mere ingenious stagecraft which brought a forest up to a French window in *Dear Brutus;* and it had a shrewder, more ironical judgment than was displayed by its author's normal view of human relations. Much of his work, it seemed, could be explained as clever stagecraft or sweet commonplace. But when these had been subtracted, something seemed to remain. It was something less tangible and infinitely more personal. One's only fear has always been that public applause, which always insists drearily on an exact repetition of successful performances, might stale its quality. If a man paints a policeman well, London—and Paris and New York, for all that I know—demands stolidly that he shall pass the remainder of his days in painting policemen. The danger of that demand has always confronted Sir James Barrie. He had pleased by being whimsical; and when a crowded house invited him to be whimsical again, one feared that his Puck would become less Puck-

like with repetition. There are few things more dreadful than a studied whimsicality; and when Rectors grow confidential about their own elfishness, one begins to be half afraid. Elves will not dance to order; and one can only hope that Sir James Barrie will never overstrain M'Connachie's one wing. He is a master of mild sentiment and of that neat manipulation of stage figures, which serves to keep the critics quiet. But tears and technique are the least important things about him. For those who can no longer laugh at his rather wry fun or weep when he evokes a glutinous might-have-been, there is still something in him which is not

> . . . bred
> in the heart or in the head.

That fancy, which is his own, must not be overworked or imitated, because it is ours also.

MANDALAY

THERE is, there was always, a certain remoteness about Mr. Rudyard Kipling. His imagination played perpetually round the ends of the earth. His earliest works were imported in blue-grey paper covers from Allahabad. Even his name came from Staffordshire. He specialised in the outer edges of Mercator's Projection, in Lungtungpen and Mandalay and those miraculous regions east of Suez where Queen Victoria's writ ran a trifle uncertainly. He even went so far afield (it was an incredible achievement in the heyday of Mrs. Humphry Ward) as to have an American public. In a generation which regarded stories of Scottish life as travellers' tales from the far North, he extended the public imagination to broad and distant horizons; and, taking whole degrees of latitude in his stride, he jerked a familiar thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the Equator, a Pole or so, and all the uncomfortable wonders of the world which lie outside the Temperate Zone. It became his mission to convince his fellow-subjects that

the British Empire was an ideal and not merely an accident, and that the oddly dressed equestrians with dark faces, who rode in the cavalcade of Queen Victoria's second Jubilee, possessed a significance beyond that normally attributed to them by the proprietors of circuses. It was a high theme, which took him up and down the map, and even into agreement with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain.

But his remoteness in place was more than equalled by his remoteness, as one looks at him now, in point of time. The Dinosaurus, one feels, can give points in modernity to Mr. Kipling. After all, it is on speaking terms with Mr. H. G. Wells. But the author of *Soldiers Three* seems to belong to an age of almost fabulous antiquity. His flag, his Queen, his soldiers are the vague figures of a mythology that is rapidly fading into folklore. His political message has a dim interest for research students. And patient excavation will, no doubt, confirm many of the statements that are to be found in his text. The old, flamboyant Anglo-Saxon challenge to the inferior peoples of the earth went under, long before Mr. Kipling had a grey hair, in the dreary watches of the South African War. It was seen in that dismal winter of 1899 that the dashing subaltern of his dreams was not even an infallible master of his own profession. It was feared that the British soldier

was even capable of fighting on the wrong side. And when the South African Constitution handsomely admitted as much, there was no place in Mr. Kipling's scheme for Louis Botha and Jan Smuts. The Imperial ideal wilted through the long years between the Peace of Vereeniging and the outbreak in 1914 of a life-sized war. The White Man grew more interested in his own highly complicated affairs than in his Burden; and gradually British opinion came to regard a Labour leader as a more important person than a retired proconsul. It was, for Lord Curzon, Lord Milner, and Lord Cromer as well as for Mr. Kipling, an embittering interlude. Then, as they say in novels when the author feels an acute need for a change of scene, the war came; and when it went, it left behind a dismal world groping for some cohesion among the broken pieces, snatching hungrily at any fragment of common organisation, but profoundly unfriendly to the old, self-seeking gesture which had painted the map red. Perhaps the map seemed quite red enough after the war. Three Empires had been hissed off the stage, and there was a sharp drop in Imperial quotations on the world market. The old ideals were looking a little guilty, even when they spoke perfect English; and there was an uneasy suspicion that the gleam which Mr. Kipling had followed was the silver gleam of an eagle

perched on an old man's helmet among the trees at Doorn.

But as one turns the page and passes into Mr. Kipling's kingdom, one is centuries away from the pale uncertainties, the dingy, poor-spirited doubts of the world we live in. The Queen is on her throne again at Windsor; her sentries pace up and down the world; and the secrets of the universe fall open at the command of a cocksure young man in spectacles with a large moustache, "a strangely clever youth," as a startled commentator observed him, "who has stolen the formidable mask of maturity and rushes about making people jump with the deep sounds, the sportive exaggerations of tone, that issue from its painted lips." There is something which must remind one of Gulliver among the largest and most majestic of his hosts in the spectacle of Mr. Henry James turning that solemn microscope on Mr. Kipling. Yet the criticism (it is in a forgotten preface of an obscure American volume) contains the wisest enumeration of Mr. Kipling's qualities.

His extreme youth is indeed what I may call his window-bar—the support on which he somewhat rowdily leans while he looks down at the human scene with his pipe in his teeth; just as his other conditions (to mention only some of them) are his prodigious facility, which is only less remarkable than his stiff selection; his unabashed tempera-

ment, his flexible talent, his smoking-room manner, his familiar friendship with India—established so rapidly, and so completely under his control; his delight in battle, his "cheek" about women—and indeed about men and about everything; his determination not to be duped, his "imperial" fibre, his love of the inside view, the private soldier, and the primitive man.

The whole of Mr. Kipling is to be found somewhere along the branches of that ramifying sentence. It has been written more than thirty years; and in the interval his familiarity with India has taken in another continent or so; the flexible talent has been bent to verse, to prophecy, to ancient history, to the elusive pursuit of English landscape; and the prodigious facility, alas! has run dry. But the smoking-room manner, the love of the inside view, remained constant; and criticism, through the mouth of Mr. Henry James in 1891, had said its last word on Mr. Kipling.

Technically, of course, his achievement has been astounding. He handled the foils in the short story with unparalleled skill; and as a stylist he enlarged the limits of the English language with all the gusto of an Empire-builder planting the flag in undiscovered regions. But not all his conquests (one has noticed the same weakness among Empire-builders) were of equal value. His contribution to the poetic

vocabulary seemed principally to consist in scraps of Hindustani, the simple litany of the blaspheming soldier, and the deeper tone of the Authorised Version (O.T.). By persons unfamiliar with the original, Mr. Kipling is frequently admired for qualities which should be attributed with greater accuracy to the Jacobean translator of the Book of Psalms. But one feels that as a poet he found the English language marble and left it stucco. The new building material is at once cheaper to get and easier to handle; and his introduction of it on the market has brought poetic composition within the means of persons who should never have been able to afford a Rhyming Dictionary. Perhaps his imitators are the gravest wrong which Mr. Kipling has inflicted upon his country's literature.

But his contribution to English prose is more serious. That instrument, since English falls naturally into poetry just as French falls into prose and German into ballads, is perhaps the most difficult to play upon in the whole range of language. Mr. Kipling played on his instrument with queer, *staccato* jerks and sudden discords. There were new notes in it which shocked the old concert-goers; and to some hearers the music seems sometimes to degenerate into mere noise. But his touch was astonishingly sure, and he played on the English language an air

which had never been heard before. One may say that under his hand the instrument of prose lost some of its deeper notes, grew shriller, often trailed away into discord. But it rendered strange airs which could never have come over the old strings, and Mr. Kipling left it the richer and the better for his innovations.

It is easy enough to find his stale politics ridiculous, or to see, with Mr. Beerbohm, an ineluctable vulgarity in the perpetual knowingness of his unchanging wink. But Mr. Kipling, in his true perspective, is something more than a warning to young poets or a monument of late-Victorian Imperialism. He sharpened the English language to a knife-edge, and with it he has cut brilliant patterns on the surface of our prose literature. At least two of the best stories in the world are somewhere behind that line of red book-backs; and scattered up and down inside the books are scores of vivid little etchings, fit for a place in any portfolio—blazing sunlight, some seascapes of the North Atlantic, frontier fighting, a dozen men, some women, and one doleful little boy. He has made his contribution to letters; and one day, when the new voices are less insistent and through a silence we can catch his strange, halting tones, it will be remembered.

THE SEVEN SAGES

M. Anatole France
Mr. Thomas Hardy
Mr. H. G. Wells
Mr. Bernard Shaw
Mr. Arnold Bennett
Mr. Joseph Conrad
Mr. John Galsworthy

M. ANATOLE FRANCE

It was one of those large rooms, all corners and *chiaroscuro,* which are not so much furnished as stocked with an assortment of rather strident historical allusions. The most respectful observer could hardly avoid noticing that the "periods" had got a trifle mixed. It was all a little like the local colour in a costume novel by a popular favourite whose heart had got the better of her head, or the historical references of an impulsive statesman when his private secretary is away in the country.

The room had undeniably an air; but the air converged upon it from so many quarters as to amount almost to a succession of draughts. The more subdued *bric-à-brac* was of Greek origin. But it was almost effaced by the high colouring of the Della Robbia family; and on the walls behind it there was a loud suggestion of tapestry. There were a few prints from another century; and in one corner of the room, where the ornaments stood in deep shadow, one detected the familiar whisper of the last enchantments

of the Middle Age. Even the books were bound in bright parchment anachronisms; and the gilding on the chairs, in this pleasant welter of Florence and Tanagra and Hampton Court, was a gracious reminiscence of King Louis XVI. It was, in fine, just such a symphony of discordant styles as had tempted the poor lady in the story to "finger fondly the brasses that Louis Quinze might have thumbed, to sit with Venetian velvets just held in a loving palm, to hang over cases of enamels and pass and repass before cabinets." And, as at Poynton, one hardly noticed the people, unless indeed one was so sensitive that one could not bear to look at the furniture. It was "the Things, always the splendid Things," that held the centre of the stage.

But there were a few people besides. They lurked about among the furniture, and for the most part they said extremely little. There was a young man, who said at intervals "*Cher maître*"; and the whole group converged visibly, with the respectful convergence of *coryphées* upon the *prima ballerina*, on an arresting figure. It was dressed with some care in the attractive uniform of a Continental sage. That is to say, it wore a dressing-gown of some bright colour with a gay silk skull-cap, which sat merrily above a long, familiar face. The face was old and a little sad, but rather charming; and a narrow beard made it still

longer. He moved about the room and talked at random; and at intervals the young man said *"Cher maître."*

That expression has always seemed to be the compensation maliciously provided by an all-seeing Providence for the undue felicity of French men of letters. They have an assured standing; an admirable and uniform prose style may be acquired at almost any school; and their sick beds are frequently enlivened by the impending presence of a Minister of Fine Arts or even the President of the Republic, prepared to attach the insignia of the *Légion d'Honneur* to the nightclothes of the happy sufferer. They enjoy wise criticism, discreet publicity, and an Academy. But it is decreed by the mysterious checks and balances which order the universe that young men should address them as *"Cher maître."* Almost tolerable, by comparison, is the ruder destiny of writers in an adjacent island, who travel through the dark void of English letters to the deeper obscurity of the Order of Merit. Ignored by a busy race which can memorise its Derby winners with its Kings of England, unknown to native statesmen who never hesitate for a batting average, they seem as unsubstantial as the squeaking wraiths of Penelope's suitors. Their shadowy figures flit about the suburbs; their faint names are spoken uncertainly in circulat-

ing libraries. No Academy crowns their works; no critics "place" them unerringly in an exact hierarchy of letters; no respectful deputations crowd their obscure death-beds. Theirs is a singularly humble lot. But when their fellow-countrymen speak to them (to ask the time, it may be, or to invite their opinion on Cup-tie prospects), they call them by their own names. For, by the great mercy of heaven, there is no English for *"Cher maître."*

One seems always to detect something a shade depressing about the flavour of the incense that is offered to successful men of letters. There, in the large room, was an inimitably frivolous old gentleman who had smiled discreetly at half the things in life. He had smiled, a little bitterly, at love. He had smiled, in two large volumes, at Joan of Arc; and he had smiled, in a parable of bird life and an exquisite tetralogy, at the history of his own country. When he came to his own memories, he almost forgot to smile. But during a long life he had abounded in irony, in that quality without which (as he once wrote) *"le monde serait comme une forêt sans oiseaux,"* which is (as he defined it) *"la gaieté de la réflexion et la joie de la sagesse."* He had reflected his mood in the still waters of a perfectly transparent style, which was like *"une grande glace sans défaut dont le mérite est de laisser tout voir sans paraître*

elle-même." And yet, at the end of it all, he was discoursing vaguely in a large room to a respectful company, which tried hard to remember each of his sayings and took them quite literally. Approving Boswells beamed at the end of every sentence, and eternal truths were detected in each casual reply. That was, perhaps, the greatest irony of all.

There is something almost tragic about the old age of humorists. This, one always feels, is the kind of figure about which they could have been so funny twenty years ago. And now they no longer see, because they have themselves become, the joke. The delightful greybeard strayed about among his *bric-à-brac* and talked profoundly, whilst the young man in the corner called him "*Cher maître.*" Was it for this, one wonders, that he had pointed fingers of polite derision at smart ladies and grubby poets, that he smiled that sharp smile of his at the Republic itself and even at the sacred Revolution from which it sprang? He seems so mild, surrounded by his visitors. Yet he has shrugged amiably at love and death. He has been disrespectful about fashion and M. Émile Zola. He has smiled at pride and pedantry and faith.

But when he smiled at faith, it was an indulgent smile. His wit is rarely cutting with a Bishop; and he becomes almost tender with a Father of the

Church. These simple figures may provoke him to a mild regret: *"les martyrs manquent d'ironie et c'est là un défaut impardonnable."* But he seems to finger their copes and their chasubles and their rags with a lingering affection. How often he has returned from other fields to their quiet neighbourhood. He would write about the great world and all the clever gentlemen in Paris. But at the end of it he seemed always to escape with visible relief into the less exacting company of a saint. He was more at ease in the bright sunshine and simple notions of the Third Century; and although he might sometimes get as far as Florence, he was generally to be found in the Thebaid.

It is a queer predilection; and one is a little apt to stare, as the erudite unbeliever prostrates himself with earnest regularity at the empty shrines of other men's beliefs. *"Son athéisme,"* as he once wrote of a dull poet, *"est si pieux, qu'il a semblé chrétien à certaines personnes croyantes."* Indeed the casual reader of his work might well mistake him for a Christian apologist with an unusual turn of style. He is always murmuring the blessed catalogue of the martyrs; and he deviates at the least excuse into the early history of the religion, to which he has vowed disobedience. There is something odd about the weakness which irreligious men feel for religion. Almost invariably

it becomes their favourite topic. When a novelist abjures the Church, one may be certain that his future work will teem with martyrs and pullulate with theological *finesse*. The literary Thebaid is full of the lonely cells of unbelieving and almost intolerably holy men. Religion, by some queer revenge, seems to haunt them perpetually; and these unbelievers return to it with the harping eagerness of a missionary, until to the normal man their obsession becomes almost monotonous.

So much of his work is touched with that quaint infection that this piety of his—*son athéisme si pieux*—becomes its foremost feature. One half forgets the ambling charm of his humour and the fine sweep of his vision of history in this continual fingering of Early Christian relics. The indefatigable pietist is perpetually rolling out his deep Gregorians or polishing the jewels on his reliquary. His busy fancy flits from saint to saint, and Church music is the constant accompaniment of his anti-clericalism. He is a persevering unbeliever and a regular non-attendant at public worship. Yet, in spite of it all, this conscientious secularist cannot help intoning *À bas la calotte* in antiphones. It is an odd Nemesis.

One is left wondering how that enlightened imagination got its queer twist, why this fine intelligence is haunted by the unfascinating little figures which

populate the early history of the Church. Perhaps they have one attraction which might draw a Frenchman. Almost incapable of realising any foreigner and always prone to envisage the East as a comprehensive and mysterious region known as *les Indes,* the Gaul is infinitely sensitive to any product of French territory. That many explain his predilection for the early phase of Christian history, when the holy men sat in the sunshine by the Nile and the little white shrines took the African glare at mid-day. For Christianity, in that stage, was almost an Algerian phenomenon. St. Anthony was an inspired *fellah;* and one may almost see the early Fathers as Christian *marabouts.* The hot still distances of the Thebaid have the true flavour of North Africa, and a Frenchman might safely investigate its queer inmates without finding himself in unfamiliar country.

But even that can hardly explain the strange attraction. The problem still remains of the wise, modern eclectic staring in fascination at the gesticulating little figures in the sunshine of the Third Century. There is nothing Athenian about them, and not much that is Roman. For they have no style and very little logic. But something about them appears to stir a vague envy in their sage posterity . . . "*la foi s'en est allée. Nous n'avons plus d'espérances et nous ne croyons plus à ce qui consolait nos pères.*

Cela surtout nous est pénible. Car il était doux de croire même à l'enfer." The irony seems to fade out of it; and one is left with the dejected heir of all the ages craving for one, just one untruth to shield him from the naked and intolerable glare of reality. That, perhaps, is why he haunts the unenlightened company of bigots. He might have moved among his own omniscient contemporaries or the wise men and twisted words in Athens. But he preferred the saints. They have the primitive virtues; and life is, for them, so infinitely more simple. *Car il était doux de croire même à l'enfer.* So, by a pleasant irony, the unbeliever turned pietist. And perhaps the irony was not his own.

MR. THOMAS HARDY

British criticism, in spite of the lively young gentlemen who write the reviews for the newspapers, has always shown a becoming respect for its elders. One is perpetually giving up one's seat in the intellectual omnibus to veterans, who sink into it breathing heavily (and, not infrequently, without saying "Thank you"); and there has been quite an orgy of little presentations to old gentlemen on behalf of the Younger Generation—occasions on which it is to be feared that tact on both sides was strained to breaking point, because the old gentlemen had hardly realised that they were quite so old as all that, and the Younger Generation, when it was shown in, seemed a shade balder than their host had been led to hope.

Age, at any rate, has had its due; and quite a number of bath-chairs have been wheeled respectfully up the easy gradients of the British Parnassus. It is a form of good manners in which the people of these islands appear to excel, possibly be-

cause, in the highest possible degree, it combines sentimentality with cheapness. It is so obviously a less expensive matter to crown an established reputation with a handful of bay-leaves out of the garden than to stand Chatterton a square meal; and there is something about the process that is a trifle more flattering to the national vanity. The English have always preferred their young geniuses starving, and almost from the beginning they have specialised in Grand Old Men. It is less, perhaps, an inverted form of "Beaver" than an odd survival of their primeval taste for Druids.

Public attention in these islands is always assured for veteran statesmen or venerable poets. The national oracles, it would seem, are uniformly recruited from the superannuation list; and opinion is almost entirely formed by the rude forefathers of the hamlet talking in their sleep, whilst their shrines at Hawarden or Farringford are crowded with eager devotees. It is an unhealthy tendency, since it has stimulated in persons anxious to secure the public ear a morbid affectation of senility. The sprightly figures, which our political parties carry before them into battle, have adopted almost to a man a remarkable (and nearly identical) disguise, consisting of a great deal of very long, white hair, because they recognised—with some reluctance in the case of Mr.

Churchill—that this evidence of extreme age was the sole passport to their countrymen's respect.

Its influence in letters has been still more unhappy. The craving for tribal elders is satisfied in Wales by the simple-minded expedient of a direct impersonation of Druids at an annual charade. North of the Border they met it with strange nocturnal incantations at the shrine of Robert Burns. But in England, where the spectacle of old gentlemen in nightshirts has always been considered ridiculous, and nobody has ever succeeded in retaining the name of a deceased poet for ten years after his death, it affects criticism in a different and perhaps more sinister way and sets us all spotting *doyens*. In the absence of an Academy (and even the carefully selected senility of the Order of Merit is no real substitute) British opinion is perpetually engaged in recruiting octogenarians whom it can acclaim in a nice low voice as the greatest living practitioners of some one or other of the arts. Like that school of novelists in the last century which suffered from a morbid predilection for the last specimen of any species (whether of Mohicans or of Days of Pompeii), the British critic is always out mammoth-hunting. Contemporary gadflies are popped into the killing bottle and forgotten. But his elephant-gun is always ready, his glass is always sweeping the sky-line for the great

humped back, the curling tusks, the trunk, the lumbering, heavy tread of the Last, the very last of the Great Victorians. Indeed, it saves a great deal of trouble when this interesting specimen has had the courtesy to get inside a glacier and die. One can analyse and appreciate so much more conveniently when the writer has ceased writing. Then one is sure of him; and the impressive figure can be enthroned as a Master, a *doyen,* and a warning to all young people with pen and ink who feel inclined to write before they are turned eighty.

British criticism is largely given over to the erection of these melancholy totems; and it has been one of the liveliest spectacles of the past few years to watch Mr. Thomas Hardy eluding their efforts. An obvious victim, with his long and glorious achievement and his crown of years, he has obstinately refused to be caught and stuffed. The first essential of a literary totem is that he should leave off writing; one must be able to refer to his work in a past tense. But Mr. Hardy, who might take his ease and sniff the incense as a *doyen,* a great name, a fragment of the past, remains a writer. It is not many months since he took the water once again in a volume of verse with a truculent Jolly Roger at the main, that warned all critics to stand by and dip their colours. That is a brave encouragement to every man who

faces the universe with a pen in his hand, a finer evening to the long day than any golden glow of retrospect. Mr. Hardy is not the last of any species, least of all of the Victorians; but his contemporaries may honour him as a contemporary, without the faint condescension which one reserves for relics, as the first and greatest of the Georgians.

Yet if one's first verse was written in 1865, when Lord Palmerston was the Queen's Minister, and one's first novel was reviewed in 1871, almost a decade before Disraeli's last, there is bound to be some flavour of the past about the work. You will not find it where the birds wheel slowly above the great brown face of Egdon Heath. There is nothing that bears date in the cruel, dragging death of the Mayor of Casterbridge, unless it is the date of *Œdipus* and *King Lear,* and the ages when tragedy was not afraid to speak with a full voice. Perhaps there is a faint *démodé* touch of moral squeamishness in Tess, a mincing quality in some of his great ladies which you will hardly find in the modern young person and her mistress. But, then, Wessex is far away from towns—a long walk from the colleges at Christminster, and further still from London; and things change slowly in the country. There is a strangely modern quality in Mr. Hardy's stories, a touch of the hardness which mild-eyed mothers are

meeting in their daughters and staid Victorian critics reproved in Mr. Hardy. The wry smile with which he watches life, sitting behind his hedge to see the crowds go by, go singing up the lane that leads to the rough moors and sometimes to the steep drop by the old quarry, is not old-fashioned. His philosophy may not be cheering; honest philosophies rarely are. But it is not out of date. The quiet glee with which he observes his fellow-creatures going to their doom is not an old man's pessimism. It is the youthful temper which moves small boys to spasms of secret laughter, when their elders majestically navigate a road that leads to an inevitable, an ineluctable butter-slide. The world, to Mr. Hardy, is one long lane that leads to an eternal booby-trap; and the enjoyment which he derives from sitting behind the hedge and watching the victims go past, is unfailing, if not particularly infectious.

Perhaps there is one corner of his work which is flecked with grey, which seems to bear in legible figures the date at which it was written. The fine, truculent face which he turns towards established religion has something in its look of the stern negation of the last century, of that singular crusade in which men solemnly took no cross and rode out to establish the faith that there was no faith. No dogma was ever so rigid as the agnostic's; and one

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may sometimes catch in Mr. Hardy's utterance a note of that empty catechism, an echo of those hollow pulpits. He seems to deny as though denial were a new and daring faith, a discovery by men who had sailed into unknown seas and found there was nothing. It is his one concession to the *Zeitgeist* of his own generation. Perhaps he learnt it when he was a church architect in the Sixties: it would not be easy to combine faith with the construction of country churches in the Victorian Gothic.

For nearly thirty years, whilst strange new stars have climbed the sky and dipped and faded, his row of novels has stood on English shelves without a new one at the right-hand end. Someone in 1895 was shocked by *Jude*. England could stand the Yellow Book, but pulled long faces when unbelief ceased to be an affectation and became a creed. So Mr. Hardy withdrew into the blameless paths of poetry. The authority of Lord Tennyson could be quoted for the expression of honest doubt in that medium; and it was not felt that he was subverting the foundations of the State, when his sardonic anecdotes were retailed in *staccato* metre.

Often he seemed merely to play over his old pieces on a different instrument. The poem was, in many cases, a study for a novel, a little drawing for the great cartoon. But once, at least, in the years when

King Edward reigned and a Mr. Austin was his Laureate, Mr. Hardy played in the full tones which Browning had caught rolling from Abt Vogler's manual, with every stop full out and a great surge of sound above the little congregation. *The Dynasts* was decorated with the forbidding description of "an epic drama." In reality it was a chronicle play of the Great War of which the Trumpet-Major had seen something, with Napoleon for its principal and half Europe for its stage. Written in French, it would have been crowned by the Academy, nationalised, State-endowed, and played annually by two Divisions at the Camp of Châlons. In Germany, they would have built something vast for Reinhardt to produce it in. In Russian, it would have made an English reputation. But solemn ladies continued to labour through *War and Peace* without a notion that an Englishman had caught the stamp and thunder of ten years of history in the great roll of a tragedy. It was an achievement on the fullest scale, in the Grand Manner, of the very first importance. And it was barely noticed. Even the young gentlemen, who hasten to Dorchester in the vain attempt to catch and canonise Mr. Hardy, are inclined to reserve their panegyrics for the strange, halting music of his shorter pieces, when the great tragedy stands there as the last and largest achievement of a master of two mediums.

MR. H. G. WELLS

A WITTY lady, whose novels must be almost as much pleasure to write as they are to read, has discriminated wisely between the things that are and are not News. "Crime is News; divorce is News; girl mothers are News; fabric gloves and dolls' eyes are, for some unaccountable reason, News; centenaries of famous men are, for some still stranger reason, News; strangest of all, women are, inherently and with no activities on their part, News, in a way that men are not. . . . If you do wrong you are News, and if you have a bad accident you are News; but, if you mysteriously disappear you are doubly and trebly News. To be News once in one's life—that is something for a man. Though sometimes it comes too late to be enjoyed."

High up in that enviable category, to a degree which surpasses the public interest in such literary trifles as a posthumous fragment of Jane Austen or a belated reappearance of Mr. Thomas Hardy, or even the secret marriage of a lady novelist who seemed

to have been reading one of her own stories, Mr. H. G. Wells is, beyond any other member of his calling, News. His activities have attracted that mysterious measure of public attention which is necessary in order to take a writer out of those inglorious little paragraphs, in which alarmingly well-informed gentlemen prattle artlessly about Forthcoming Books and the startling holiday adventure of a well-known circulating-library favourite, who upon one occasion . . . Popular interest has landed Mr. Wells in the rougher waters beyond the breakwater, where the news items of the real world jostle one another for our attention, because he is no longer Literary Gossip: he is News.

It is, perhaps, his ardent, his obstinate connection with the real world which gives him his distinctive position. But at the same time it has gone a long way to deprive him, in the appreciation of fastidious persons, of that rank in the hierarchy of English prose to which he has better claims than almost any of his contemporaries. They might have pardoned him, one feels, the inelegance of being widely read; even Mr. Conrad's *chic* has survived his popularity. But Mr. Wells has committed a graver indiscretion than success. He has written steadily for more than a quarter of a century, and during the whole of that time he has invariably written *about* something: it

was a tragic lapse. He and his characters have maintained an almost truculent connection with reality that is profoundly distasteful to the delicate palates of our connoisseurs. One may be sure, to name only three popular effigies, that if M. Swann had interested himself actively in child-welfare, if Captain Marlow had played a prominent part in agitating for an amendment of the Merchant Shipping Act, if old Mr. Verver had taken an intelligent interest in the amelioration of labour conditions in America, the reputations of M. Proust, Mr. Joseph Conrad, and Mr. Henry James would have suffered a grave deterioration. That is why Mr. Wells is often out of favour with the *Illuminati.*

Yet it is rarely safe to assume that because an artist is interested in Subject, he is necessarily ignorant of Method. A slender talent may be capable only of one or the other, but a master is equal to both; and if you subtract from Mr. Wells the whole of his vivid interest and his fun and his practical significance, you will find that there remains enough bare technical accomplishment to furnish two or three ordinary reputations. He wrote short stories with enormous skill in the days when the magazines were a crowded competition between Mr. Kipling, Mr. Barrie, Mr. Stevenson, Mr. Henry James, Mr. George Gissing, Mr. Joseph Conrad, Mr. George Moore, and all the

names of the Nineties. He has contributed, perhaps more than any other writer, to the widening, the enlivening, the greater elasticity of the English novel, which has left it as an almost perfect vehicle for anything that a writer has to say. And through it all he has handled the awkward, the incomparable instrument of English prose with that rare skill, which simple readers take for spontaneity. It has conveyed the sharp thrusts of his wit and the broad, slow smile of his and Mr. Polly's and Uncle Ponderevo's humour. It has described life and death and love and violence with a singular vividness. And more often than one is apt to remember it has painted beauty, sometimes with the bright touch of Mr. Lewisham's "Scandalous Ramble," and sometimes with the slow magic of that enchanted garden behind *The Door in the Wall,* or the exquisite brushwork which made a green hedge in a fairy-tale about a Comet.

> It was a very glorious hedge, so that it held my eyes. It flowed along and interlaced like splendid music. It was rich with lupins, honeysuckle, campions, and ragged robin; bedstraw, hops and wild clematis twined and hung among its branches, and all along its ditch border the starry stitchwort lifted its childish faces and chorused in lines and masses. Never had I seen such a symphony of note-like flowers and tendrils and leaves. And suddenly, in its depths, I heard a chirrup and the whir of startled wings.

There is much more in that than the mere skill of a clever writer of scientific romances, or the alertness of a sharp observer.

But after all the thing said, whatever critics may pretend, is infinitely more important than the manner of saying it; and with Mr. Wells one has always the agreeable certainty that his interest is far more in his subject-matter than in the literary process. Indeed, there are moments when he seems to be so eager to deliver his message as to stray rather outside the frame of the picture in which he is conveying it. But his message (if one may employ a term with offensively evangelical connotations), the thing that he is attempting to say, is always the most important matter about Mr. Wells and his work. There are other writers, pure stylists and mere literary performers, of whom one may say (with Mr. Albert Chevalier) that it ain't exactly what they say, but the funny way they say it. With Mr. Wells, however, it is quite the reverse. Posterity will read him (and it *will* read him) for the sake of the things that he says, for the vivid image that he conveys of mind, manners, morals, politics, and all the rest of it in late-Victorian, Edwardian, neo-Georgian England.

In one popular estimate, that has survived obstinately from a distant past in which his imagination was entirely engaged by the progress of mechanical

invention and the march of the Fabian Society towards its strictly hygienic Utopia, he is still widely regarded as a specialist in the Future. Reporters interview him gravely upon the prospects of the race; and he is expected to greet each step in human development with a triumphant ejaculation of "I told you so." Yet he would probably prefer to be thought of as the most judicious exponent of the Past, as the first historian to find something more in history than the record of a single nation, or even of the human race.

But the whole of his work leaves one, somehow, with a different impression. One has a conviction that his supreme achievement is his steady and vivid reproduction of the Present, of the passing moment and the contemporary mental atmosphere in which at any given time he is writing. He has painted the intellectual portrait of every epoch of his career: of the precise material ambitions of 1898, which saw a new heaven and a new earth in the horseless carriage and the flying machine; of the vague social aspirations of young Edwardians, to whom the Fabian Society was a revelation and the General Election of 1906 a breaking of chains; of the uneasy, ill-directed longings for a better organised world which preceded the war; and of the vast, dismal realisation of the work to be done which followed the peace. His work is a

long gallery of "period" pictures; of Mr. Hoopdriver bicycling through the Home Counties a year or so before the Diamond Jubilee; of Kipps and Mr. Lewisham in the happy British world which President Kruger and General Botha had not yet robbed of its Imperial illusions; of Remington regenerating the subjects of King Edward VII. with the Endowment of Motherhood; of Mr. Britling thinking the confused welter of English thoughts in war-time; and of Joan and Peter facing the chilly, post-war future with the bleak common-sense with which the war replaced the sentiment of the Victorians and the easy idealism of the Edwardians.

Mr. Wells (one can see it so clearly, as one looks back up the long perspective of his work) has always reflected with astonishing accuracy the mood and outlook of his time. Yet his thought never lacks the sweep and vigour of a startlingly original mind. His mental habit, as is not unusual, has been admirably described of someone else. *Ceux qui vous connaissent intimement assurent qu'il y a en vous du rêveur. Ils ne se trompent pas. Seulement vous rêvez très vite. . . . La facilité avec laquelle vous pensez est prodigieuse. Vous comprenez tout à la fois. Votre conversation, rapide et brillante comme la lumière, m' éblouit toujours. Pourtant elle est toujours raisonnable. Eblouir avec la raison, cela n'a été donné*

qu'à vous. Quel écrivain vous feriez, si vous aviez moins d'idées. . . .

But his speculations invariably start on their bold career into the Future from a thorough understanding of the Present. His real merit as a prophet is not so much his evocation of the world in 1960 as an incomparably clear vision of the world in 1923. One hesitates, in a time when it is sufficient to dress carelessly and write incoherently to be called a genius, to put a name to his gift. But that clear vision, which enables Mr. Wells to depict men and women and wars and cities and bishops and Chinamen and shop assistants, to see the drive of a tendency across the plains of America and the little fields of Europe, and the slow drift of mankind down the broad stream of its history, is his peculiar possession.

One thinks of him as a pair of bright eyes, watching the world alertly and not without malice. . . .

MR. BERNARD SHAW

Mr. Shaw, like Tithonus, has discovered the secret of eternal age. He is emphatically the Boy who would, however young he might appear to be, grow up. Other men spend half a life-time in the laborious acquisition of enough grey hairs to lecture their countrymen. They write; they travel; they govern remote parts of the Empire. They wait until at least half the community believes them to be dead; and then, in measured accents, they begin to be didactic. But this long probation was distasteful to Mr. Shaw. He was confronted at birth by the challenging spectacle of his countrymen spread out in rows before him, waiting to learn. It seemed superfluous to qualify for their attention; and, instead, he promptly claimed it. At twenty-five he was telling them how to do it with the bland assurance of an Elder Statesman. Before he was thirty, he had instructed them in the arts of music, literature, and the drama; and at thirty-five he was reconstructing their morality upon lines which he attributed, with

some temerity, to Ibsen. He dealt in certainties, because he made it a rule to know better than his audience. Yet this impetuous flow of instruction was not due to arrogance. The instructor of the English-speaking race was the humblest of men. He has always talked like an uncle to his countrymen, because he has always been old enough to be their uncle. Perhaps he is a rare, an almost alarming case of accelerated development. One seems to think of him as a sort of inverted Peter Pan.

But his native modesty is uncontaminated by the stern duty of setting everybody right. One of the most engaging features of his method is an unassuming habit of attaching to his strictly personal opinions the name of some recognised (and, if possible, Continental) authority. He invoked the almost spectral name of Ibsen to sanctify his views about Romance. Secure in the certainty that nobody read Nietzsche, he attributed to that shadowy figure his own curious convictions upon the future of the race. Schopenhauer, Wagner, Tchekov, Mozart, even the persevering M. Brieux, each found himself involved in these embarrassing attentions, as Mr. Shaw demurely deposited his intellectual offspring on their doorsteps with a shy intimation of the paternity of his opinions. His prehensile modesty has wriggled behind half the great names in Europe. It enveloped their startled

owners with his own views, as the serpents once enveloped Laocoon and his sons. There were no limits to his coyness. He even helped his friends to form a Fabian Society, in order that there might be in existence a body to which he could safely attribute his own views on current politics. The attribution was successful beyond the founder's most guileful dreams. Suburban statisticians simper proudly at imputations of wicked heterodoxy; and those dismal zealots stand, in the public mind, for freakish qualities which belong exclusively to Mr. Shaw.

Yet the gifts which he most cherishes are the least significant things about him. He seems sometimes to see himself as a statesman. He has never underrated his own significance as a thinker. His opinions upon typography, oratorio, and municipal politics extort his unqualified admiration; and he has almost equalled his own expectations as a clothing-, food-, or even spelling-reformer. But there is one light which he has an odd tendency to hide beneath impenetrable bushels, whilst he uncovers with a sweeping gesture other and far, far briefer candles. He writes plays.

Mr. Shaw as a dramatist enjoys a peculiar advantage over his competitors. They spend laborious lives in a long endeavour to convert the actions and conversation of human beings into an attractive enter-

tainment. Mr. Galsworthy pretends that they are all ill-treated; Sir James Barrie (with him, Mr. A. A. Milne) lends them wings; Mr. John Drinkwater dresses them up in a persevering series of mild historical charades. But sooner or later in the evening, since audiences are human as well as the characters in their plays, come the *longueurs*, the stifled yawns, the faint regrets that we are not safe at home, which invariably result from several hours passed in the uninterrupted society of our fellow-creatures. The figures in other plays are, as Nietzsche ecstatically observed in another context, "human, all too human." But Mr. Shaw has soared, from the very first, superior to this vulgar limitation. To him occurred the happy notion of relieving the British drama from its intolerable burden of human beings and substituting, as the docile vehicles of his inimitable monologue, a procession of fantastic puppets. Impressed, as so many serious critics have been, with the manifest superiority of Punch and Judy to almost all competing plays, he realised that their inspired author triumphed because he interposed no flicker of reality, no faint, disturbing touch of human character between the mind of his audience and that magnificently bleak conception of crime and punishment. Mr. Shaw, as one seems to see him, resolved to do likewise, to project the cold light of his magic-

lantern on the screen without the baffling intervention of any human figure, of any remotest touch of sordid reality.

His audiences breathe an air that is unreal beyond transpontine melodrama and the transformation-scenes of pantomimes. He opens a not particularly magic casement on the foam of perilous seas in lands which, though questionably faery, are indubitably forlorn; and he hears the horns of Elfland blowing unearthly, but distinctly novel, airs. His parables are performed by figures of the wildest romance—an inspired head-waiter, an intelligent General, some homicidal surgeons, a saint or so, and a few historical characters neatly inverted. Their lives, their utterances, their motives bear no relation to the normal and hardly any to the more exotic standards of those rococo types which specialise in Movements and have made Mr. Shaw the uncomplaining victim of their social ambitions. One passes, with the rise of the curtain, into a grotesque fairyland in which all things are possible. King's Counsel wear false noses; Regius Professors of Greek join the Salvation Army and play the drum; Miss Ellen Terry appears suddenly in Mogador; and lions chase Roman Emperors round and round the stage. But the oddities of motive and opinion are even stranger than the superficial queerness of Mr. Shaw's scene. As he jerks

the wires, his little figures fall into strange, exaggerated postures which bear no resemblance to the easy attitudes of human beings. Their tiny mouths fall open; but the voice which reaches the audience has a uniform, a familiar Irish accent. They expose with admirable lucidity their author's personality; but they do it at the sacrifice of their own. How much of Mr. Shaw one may learn from his "Cæsar," and how little of Cæsar. Even his comic dustman, one feels, would be more at home on a Fabian platform than in the humbler exercise of his calling. Perhaps the dramatist's main concern with his characters should be to present a little set of lightning biographies: Mr. Shaw seems to have chosen to compose instead his own intellectual autobiography, and to offer it in a series of mildly dramatic instalments.

Yet there is something else with which playwrights are concerned. Their business, as solemn gentlemen remind them in print on the morning after the first performance, is to write plays, to construct an entertainment round some dramatic pivot. Even the Greeks achieved it; although they had not, for the most part, the advantage of reading Aristotle. Modern writers, with the voluble assistance of modern critics, have persevered in the attempt to be dramatic. But Mr. Shaw has intermittently scandalised the experts by a bland refusal to play the

game according to the rules and a complete omission of all dramatic point. It is a healthy insurrection; since justice requires that if Wagner is permitted to write a drama that is all music, Mr. Shaw should not be excommunicated for writing a drama that is all words. The words, in his case, are excellent words, since he is primarily a good talker who manages to put his talk on paper. But one winces a little at the thought of possible "Discussions" composed by the more earnest of his younger imitators. Mr. Shaw has a wide influence on the young *Intelligentsia.* But one hopes that in this instance his departure from tradition will be a purely personal insurrection, and not a standard of revolt.

His influence is strong in those daring circles which strive to keep abreast of the best thought of King Edward's reign. He shares the politics of the Labour Party—those queer pietists who direct the onward march of Progress with eyes turned back to the vague, Victorian figure of Karl Marx. In moral matters he has always marched breast-forward to be advanced, emulating a little the progressive lady in one of Mr. Wells' novels, whose "place was in the van. She did not mind very much where the van was going so long as she was in it." In the result, perhaps, he pays the penalty of his persevering modernity; since persons, whose main determination is to be

in advance of the fashion, are apt eventually to be overtaken by it and left behind. His Ibsen and his Nietzsche bear date, as the dressmakers say. Even his Tchekov begins to look a trifle dowdy. Mr. Chesterton once wrote that "going to 'The Philanderers' is like going among periwigs and rapiers and hearing that the young men are now all for Racine." But even Mr. Chesterton's comment has been overtaken by the fashion, since the young men are once more all for Racine; and as the wheel swings slowly round again, there is still hope for Mr. Shaw.

MR. ARNOLD BENNETT

WHEN Edward Henry Machin, at the age of thirty-four, had danced with a Countess at the Town Hall, driven down hill into a canal in a runaway furniture-van, and become the youngest Mayor in England, an indignant Town Councillor inquired with what great cause he was identified. "He's identified," someone replied, "with the great cause of cheering us all up." Those are precisely the credentials which his creator has presented to the solemn guardians of the British Parnassus; and that, if one may attempt diagnosis without inpertinence, is exactly what is the matter with Mr. Bennett's literary reputation.

He began to write at an epoch sufficiently distant from our own to be infected with the queer, half-forgotten notion that authors write in order to be read. Mr. Stevenson had been read; Mr. Wilde had been read; even Mr. Pater had been readable. And it was a pardonable error in a young author to imagine that there was a more than accidental con-

nection between the design of the writer and the enjoyment of his reader. The thing might, of course, be carried too far. Mr. Hall Caine was manifestly read too much; and perhaps Miss Marie Corelli wrote with a pen that strayed uncontrolled all over the paper, whilst her eye wandered perpetually out of the window to where her darling public stood waiting in serried ranks. But there was in those days a very definite intention on the part of the writer, even of the most distinguished, to be read by someone.

In these, alas! the bright case is sadly altered. We are slowly learning that the writer exists simply to deliver his own soul, if possible in solitude. The strange, retiring creature mutters his soliloquy to the listening stars, whilst his readers hover uncertainly around, an unwanted audience. The table of modern letters is spread in the sight of no man. Perhaps a few of the author's friends (who write a little themselves) may be asked in. But the public is an uninvited guest, whose feelings are a matter of the profoundest indifference to everyone, except perhaps (if such persons still survive in the rarefied air) to publishers. Even the critics have almost ceased to matter, since nowadays, by a simple but ingenious device, the authors criticise each other. Keats waited for the critics; and as a result the critics waited, in a more sinister sense, for Keats. But if he had

lived to-day he would have been one of them. For criticism has become the side-line of half our authors. The accomplished Mr. X., whose verses we are all waiting for, pronounces the final verdict of British taste upon Mr. Y. as novelist; and when those rhymes appear, Mr. Y. as critic will signify, if he is half the man that we take him for, in the usual manner.

On this idyllic scene, where the unread exchange their mutual raptures, Mr. Bennett lingers as a strange survival. This old-world figure writes with an obstinate determination to be read. He seems to believe, in the fearless old fashion, that this is what books are made for. His plays, with a quaint adherence to tradition, are even designed to "run." It appears to be the author's queer design to give pleasure to large numbers of persons who pay for tickets on successive evenings, rather than to qualify the Sabbath gloom of a select company which gets its seats for nothing at one performance on a Sunday night. One expects such conduct from classics. Homer had tried to please his public; Euripides had even entered for competitions; Dickens and Balzac were not, one must admit, insensible to "sales." But in a contemporary it somehow seemed indelicate. Living writers are expected to cultivate their unpopularity in a literary suburb; and one can hardly wonder that the young lions of modern letters roared their astonish-

ment, as Mr. Bennett took the centre of the road as a successful author of the old school.

It has been a strange career. He has left far behind him the jewelled revolvers and hissing whispers of the Grand Babylon Hotel. He has passed the innumerable lamp-posts in Trafalgar Road and the shop-window in St. Luke's Square where Constance and Sophia stared out on life. His admiration of the dark Miss Lessways, which began one evening at the Orgreaves', has dwindled into a respectful feeling for a married woman; and he has launched Mr. Machin on a successful career in the mysterious world of the London theatre, where he has since been followed by many less desirable industrialists from the provinces. Innumerable gas-jets in back-kitchens have squealed and fluttered under his hand; and bath-taps (he has a genius for hygiene gadgets) have confessed to him all their secrets. He has watched suffragists and football matches and the slow unfolding of unpleasant symptoms, and he has stood by countless death-beds (for Mr. Bennett has something of Mr. Lytton Strachey's peculiar aptitude for last moments). And at the end of it all he moves with the assured ease of an established writer, who can find a respectful hearing for his lightest reflections on stray operas or the cookery of small French towns.

One feels that he has enjoyed himself enormously, has done it all with tremendous gusto. What fun it must have been to escape from the prim confinement of a solicitor's office in order to write Gargantuan "shockers" about elephants and automobiles and Mammoth Emporia. How entertaining to kick up sedate professional heels in reviews of unexampled arrogance. And then what an unrivalled lark to give the whole literary show away, to tell *The Truth about an Author,* to deride the *"conte*—exquisitely Gallic as to spirit and form"—and the novel that

> was to be entirely unlike all English novels except those of one author . . . to imitate what I may call the physical characteristics of French novels. There were to be no poetical quotations in my novel, no titles to the chapters; the narrative was to be divided irregularly into sections by Roman numerals only; and it was indispensable that a certain proportion of these sections should begin or end abruptly. . . . O succession of dots, charged with significance vague but tremendous, there were to be hundreds of you in my novel, because you play so important a part in the literature of the country of Victor Hugo and M. Loubet! . . . The sentences were to perform the trick of "the rise and fall." The adjectives were to have colour, the words were to have colour, and perhaps it was a *sine qua non* that even the pronouns should be prismatic—I forget.

It is precisely that cheerful irreverence about the mysteries of his craft, that obstinate refusal to prostrate himself before the Ark of the Covenant, which

has scandalised the more solemn of Mr. Bennett's critics. It was intolerable that he should titter about inspiration; it was unbearable that he should inform the world that "dramatic composition for the market is child's play compared to the writing of decent average fiction"; and it was almost beyond endurance that such a person should persist in writing extremely good plays and one of the five best novels in the English language. It was as though this frivolous young man from Staffordshire had strayed on to holy ground, and when the grave voice of criticism informed him of the fact from the burning bush, he obstinately declined to remove his shoes.

Criticism has hardly yet forgiven Mr. Trollope the confession that he wrote for three hours every morning, that it was "my custom to write with my watch before me, and to require from myself 250 words every quarter of an hour. . . . This division of time allowed me to produce over ten pages of an ordinary novel volume a day, and if kept up through ten months, would have given as its results three novels of three volumes each in the year." There is something of that brisk, Victorian efficiency in Mr. Bennett's attitude to literature; and those drooping spirits, which seek in affectations of fastidiousness an excuse for their own debility, will quail before the towering column of his bibliography. But he, one

feels, has enjoyed every word of it. He seems to giggle over the jokes in his own plays and to thrill with his own spectacular effects. His short stories have been all too short for him and his long novels not nearly long enough. He has even derived a queer avuncular pleasure from those improving volumes of good advice with which, alone in English letters since Samuel Smiles, he helps his fellow-countrymen on their way through the world. He enjoys, he must enjoy the exercise of that sharp, superficial observation, which fills page after page of fiction with a vivid counterfeit of physical reality; and he brings out tiny, unknown facts with the mild delight of a collector exhibiting his miniatures. But, most of all, he seems to find his pleasure in being "in the know," in nudging his reader with a half-spoken hint that not everybody could have told him *that*. He loves to flit about behind the scenes, to learn how the fine ladies get their finest effects, to see where dapper gentlemen buy those miraculous boots of theirs. He has a wicked knowledge of the dressing-table; millinery is an open book to him, and over Jermyn Street he has flung his shoe. With that equipment and a lucid cursive hand he has written fine, efficient fiction and has made the English theatre almost endurable.

MR. JOSEPH CONRAD

One would have said at the first blush that a Polish sea-captain was improbable. Maritime traditions are rarely strong in those countries in which it is not possible to take the children to the seaside; although there was once a Servian Navy which ran to a couple of gun-boats on the Danube, and the descendants of William Tell fly the Swiss ensign at the main (or is it the peak?) of a revenue-cutter on Lake Maggiore. But the vivacious countrymen of M. Paderewski belong essentially to *terra firma;* and even if, in rare instances, they take to the water, you would expect to find them in the Illyrian coasting service rather than the more drab surroundings of a British merchantman. So Mr. Conrad has been unlikely from the beginning of the chapter.

But the oddity of his first career pales into commonplace beside the singular quality of his second. It was strange enough for a young man from Poland to graduate in the Narrow Seas and then to beat up and down the world in British sailing-ships. The

Partition of Poland has rarely taken its victims so far afield as Singapore; and Dutch officials in Sourabaya hardly expect their callers to display any degree of familiarity with the Confederation of Radom and the architecture of Cracow. But when that remarkable shipmaster took to writing novels in his cabin, one might reasonably have felt that he was endangering his Board of Trade certificate. The Merchant Shipping Act contained no express prohibition of literary pursuits, although, doubtless, it has since been amended in view of Mr. Conrad's grave example. But his proceedings were, to say the least, highly unusual; and when he aggravated the rash experiment by writing with rare distinction in a foreign language, the whole affair began to look positively queer.

It is an odd story, odder by far than any that Mr. Conrad has written; and it would require all the slow march of his gradual narrative method to make it credible. But it is quite true; and as one writes, his strange example may be encouraging Czech cabin-boys and Croatian boatswains to read their Ollendorf and (by a natural sequence) to buy pens, ink, and paper, and become English authors. We can only hope, if Mr. Conrad is a fair sample of the bulk, that they will succeed. There is a sinister rumour that the vested interests of the Authors Society have peti-

tioned the Board of Trade to schedule the British novel as a key industry for protection under the Safeguarding of Industries Act. But, given the almost total illiteracy of our masters, the intrigue will probably fail. Mr. Conrad, at any rate, is a shining demonstration of the blessings of literary Free Trade.

There is a queer diffidence in his earlier work, which seems to mark the slow steps of a conscious beginner. You will find that in almost every story down to a date well on in his career he has chosen to place the narrative in the mouth of some casual *raconteur*. He seems to avoid coming on the stage himself to say his piece, as the indomitable Captain Marlow waves a slow cigar and does the author's work for him in a long, unfolding story. One would like some Conrad Society to give a public reading of, say, *Lord Jim*, if only in order to settle the vexed question of how long it really was that Marlow's friends sat around on that verandah whilst he talked the slow tale. But one feels that there is more than that in Mr. Conrad's indirect method. His imitators (and in some of his later work he has almost become one of his own imitators) love to employ it as a piece of subtlety. There is an ingenious fascination about straining a thin trickle of narrative through the minds of two or three intermediate narrators. It is a problem after the heart of Mr. Henry James; and he seems to find a

mild delight in fiddling with the magic-lantern and bewildering his public by interposing fresh characters, like coloured slides, between the simple story and its simpler reader. But it is cynical to conclude that Mr. Conrad set simply out to subtilise schoolboy stories of tropical adventure, to play at pirate with the air of a philosopher, to disguise a hero of Mr. R. M. Ballantyne as a victim of Mr. Henry James. Young men with adolescent tongues in beardless cheeks do things like that in Chelsea. But a Master in the Merchant Service writing in the privacy of his cabin does not play such tricks. One conjectures that Captain Marlow and the whole shadowy host of his successors, who give to Mr. Conrad's work its peculiar indirect flavour, were invented because the author feared to trust his knowledge of a strange language to the adventure of direct description. He knew that he could converse well enough in English; and he cautiously resolved, as one seems to see his design, that his stories should be told in conversation.

That caution may well have been the origin of his method, of the rambling hearsay diction in which we get the shadow-pantomime of Lord Jim and Almayer and Mr. de Barral and his inscrutable daughter. But if he was nervous about his literary manner, there was no need for diffidence about the matter. The goods which he brought to market in 1895 were of

precisely the right type. One can hardly realise in these days, when a novelist can make a name by depicting a typist in the Underground, the rich, exotic tastes of the later Nineteenth Century. The subjects of Queen Victoria began to thirst, after the first Jubilee, for colour. They turned wearily from the mild, domesticated fiction of the day, and craved, with Mr. Browning, for places and times

> When red and blue were indeed red and blue.

Even the Monarchy responded briskly to their demand, and offered them the flags and bright triumphal arches of the Second Jubilee, with lots and lots of coloured gentlemen on horseback. And there was a corresponding dash of the exotic in almost all the literature which they consumed. Those were the days when Mr. Kipling's Indian skies were blue, and he painted towns and uniforms and maps a deep, deep red. Mr. G. W. Steevens described the sunshine at Omdurman; and even Mr. Stevenson was teaching his readers to forget the grey half-tones of Scotland in the bright light of Samoa. So Mr. Conrad was well in the latest vogue when he came upon London with a remarkable prose style and a vivid memory of the Dutch East Indies. Imperialism was slightly affronted by the revelation that the British flag had omitted to wave in a region where the sun

so manifestly never set. But the brilliant oddity of the scene, the mild Malays, the bright blue sea, the deep green jungle, and the sinister Arab traders were a noble compensation; and a generation which was always fascinated by queer names (it fought for months for Buluwayo, and almost went to war for Fashoda) yielded to the exotic attractions of Samarang and Sourabaya and the slow waters of the Pantai.

Yet it was slow to discover Mr. Conrad. He had trailed his puppets up and down the Archipelago, and set them dancing on a narrow, sloping stage in South America, and even brought them home to see the Russian Revolution, before it really found him. His mastery of English was perfect, and his indirect method had ceased to be a precaution of language and become a form of literature, when they all realised, on the appearance of *Chance*, that he was a man to be read. He had been talked about for years. But respectful allusions in cultivated conversation are a meagre substitute for royalties; and before 1913 Mr. Conrad had enjoyed the limited, if distinguished, appreciation of caviare. Since then he has soared (or sunk) into popularity.

One likes him best when he is least exotic. He seems to have an unfair advantage, to play with the dice loaded in his favour, when he becalms a ship on a windless day in the shallow seas beyond

Celebes with a mutter of thunder somewhere below the sky-line and a faint line of breakers lying along a low horizon of coast, or when he sets the drums thudding behind a tall stockade as the war-canoes flicker along a dark river between the great trees. You feel that someone else who had been there might give you something (though not quite all) of the same sensation. But when he lays aside the meretricious attractions of strange climates and queer names, when he is just an ironical observer of his figures at their little antics, he is at his best. The Tropics are well enough; but there is sunshine, one feels, in Mr. Kipling, and even Mr. Hichens has seen it from the nicest hotels in southern Algeria. Perhaps the best of Mr. Conrad is the observant irony which wrote *The Duel,* and set two little figures jigging in a long and preposterous quarrel against the gaudy, shifting background of the Napoleonic Wars. It should have been illustrated by Caran d'Ache. It might almost have been written by M. Anatole France. And no *amateur* of irony (or First Empire uniforms) could find higher praise.

Mr. Conrad has a queer gift. Like Mr. Belloc, he writes English with the strange perfection of a man to whom the language is not native, with the detachment of a scholar polishing his Latin prose or his Greek iambics. One feels that he holds each sen-

tence at arm's length before he puts it into place. And its place is always in a long study of fine shades in strange, outlandish places. Mr. Conrad has lived so long in queer company that he can give a touch of oddity to almost any scene. He has made the Upper Congo inexpressibly strange; yet (it is a greater triumph) he makes the Russian Embassy of *The Secret Agent* as queer as the jungle. But his gift is something more than queer. It is great; and one is mutely thankful that, out of the four or five languages which that strange sea-captain knew, he selected English for his experiment in literature.

MR. JOHN GALSWORTHY

I

Years ago, when England walked by the mild illumination of King Edward's cigar, and the streets of his capital were a pleasant welter of horse-drawn vehicles and their new mechanical substitutes, the national intelligence was seriously exercised over the state of the national drama. It has been subject to these gusts of solemnity upon subjects to which solemnity is inappropriate ever since the discovery by those responsible for the conduct of newspapers that ideas form a useful substitute for news in the holiday season. Followed a pleasant trickle of discussion, which interrupted the quiet tedium of boating accidents and deciduous mountaineers, so seasonable and yet so monotonous in the newspapers of an English August. The mild debate drifted from the giant sea-serpent to the giant gooseberry, and from the giant gooseberry to the Modern Woman, and so, in the first years of the present century, to the New Drama.

They were all writing hard about it in the days of

the early motor races, when fainting automobilists drove precariously from Paris to Bordeaux in several days and their despairing competitors plunged impulsively into the cheering multitudes which lined the road to watch the dust go by. The topic has an exquisite, faded air of the Edwardian scene, of the bland Premiership of Mr. Balfour, of the fiery apostolate of Mr. Lloyd George. One catches a faint echo drifting down the wind from quiet days when the cinema was impressively displayed as a new marvel of science to respectful audiences in music-halls, and the Georgians were still in that horrid nursery of theirs from which they should not yet, should never have been, permitted to come downstairs into the drawing-room. And yet it is hardly fair to stare too hard at the faded colours of what once was bright. New College, even the New Theatre, was new once. And so, ever so long ago, was the New Drama.

It was a brave business in those distant days. The dark forces which controlled the British theatre (and its directors have always, if one may believe its more earnest critics, favoured a darkish shade) were to be challenged by the bright young things whose appeal was to the Few. Young Mr. Shaw, younger Mr. Galsworthy, and younger, still younger Mr. Granville Barker shouldered their pens and marched gravely into battle. The proud banner of the *Intelligentsia*

was raised in Sloane Square. If the assault could not be carried into the heart of the West End, their drums should at any rate be heard beating within a reasonably short Underground fare from it; and the Court Theatre became a sanctuary where New Dramatists of competing earnestness but equal novelty carried, as they loved to say, the torch. And by the novel practice of printing their plays they enabled those backward members of the public who would not run so far, to read.

The whole effort was a gallant endeavour to divert the British drama from its normal channels, to distract the attention of the playgoer from his favourite spectacle of a blonde, dishevelled wife returning at the fall of the curtain to a much-enduring husband after a second Act spent in the more enlivening society of another gentleman. These three figures had become the mathematical basis of British drama. There were other names on the programme, of course; a maid or so laid out an opera-cloak for the erring wife; a few guests stood round uneasily (in dress shirts) whilst she hesitated (in evening dress) on the brink of her error. But there were only three real people in the play that counted; and the sole dramatic unity which England respected was a triunity. Sometimes the actor-manager played Husband; and then his grave features were softly

lit up by a red glow from the electric-light bulbs in the fireplace, as he laid aside his book and turned to stroke the blonde leading-lady on her dishevelled head, when she crouched beside his big arm-chair to wait, the two of them together, for the slow coming of old age and the still slower fall of the curtain. Sometimes (when there was to be an act of unusual abnegation, a rare poignancy of renunciation, a slow walk up the stage with dragging footsteps and out into the darkness beyond the bookcase full of dummy books) he played Lover. Or sometimes the three figures gyrated a shade quicker: their rooms contained a delicious multiplicity of doors, and the piece was understood to have been adapted from the French. But there was never a variation in the mathematical formula, in the commuting and permuting Three, until the faint, far trumpets of the New Drama sounded thinly across London from the Court Theatre.

Their quaint notion was to adulterate the limpid flow of British drama by a sudden infiltration of ideas. For the first time in centuries some tea was to be put in the dramatic tea-pot with the water; and perhaps there would not be quite so many lumps of sugar in the cup. Ideas were a strange ingredient for an English play, and the intrepid men who were to manipulate them were largely strangers to the

English theatre. There was Mr. Shaw, who could state a case; and Mr. Barker, who could write a play; and Mr. Galsworthy, who almost alone among them could do both. He wrote, happily he still writes, an abundance of plays; but from the first he has continued to state the same case. It was in the beginning, and it has remained almost throughout his dramatic career, the case which is known to the Police-Court missionary as the Hard Case.

Mr. Galsworthy as dramatist has dealt almost exclusively in those cruel exceptions whose suffering proves the rule. If he permits justice to intrude on his stage, it is in the form of a miscarriage of justice. If he tolerates an accident, one may be sure that it is a particularly wanton accident. If there is any luck going, it will be bad luck. His point of view as a dramatist, from the days of *The Silver Box* to the days of *Loyalties,* is an extension, a projection upon the stage of the faintly oppressive humanitarianism which haunts his earlier writings. He seems to pity humanity with the mild monotony of a figure in a *Pietà.* He regards life rather as a retired inspector of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children must regard parents. The sight of a butterfly makes him think of wheels; and he can hardly bear to look at a fly without remembering the cruel, cruel amber.

It is a point of view, like another; and Mr. Galsworthy has embalmed it in an admirable series of plays. Haunted by the cruelty of life, he tends somehow to specialise in the sort of people to whom life is always cruel, in that concave type which appears to have been designed to meet the impact of disaster, in those shadowy figures who seem to wait, effaced in their little corners, for the inquest and the coroner. The faintly ineffectual charwoman who flits across the tragedy of *The Silver Box,* the helpless little clerk broken in *Justice,* even the gesticulating emptiness of the post-war daredevil who succumbs to the complex of *Loyalties* are all, one feels, congenial to Mr. Galsworthy's rather nurse-like taste for weakness. He seems to prefer his little men and women to hang about his apron strings; and it is almost always the Red Cross, scarcely ever the fiery cross, that he raises.

Yet, on the rare occasions when he has tried for larger game, his success has been proportionately large. The world, outside those humanitarian circles where Conscientious Objectors were more than casualties, is strangely unmoved by the tragedies of weaklings; but the clash and fall of stronger men is the true material of drama. Once at least, in *Strife,* Mr. Galsworthy has achieved the greater performance and set in motion two genuine, developed

adult persons down the long road which ended in "a woman dead, and the two best men both broken." That play is a singularly faultless piece of work. One feels too often with Mr. Galsworthy that he is wasting his pity; and one hates to see the milk of human kindness being poured away, as he too often and too lavishly pours it, on the sands. Mr. Galsworthy so frequently weakens a sound play by arguing a weak case. But in *Strife* one is never distracted from the march of the tragedy by a flaw in the argument. One was disinclined to be persuaded of the futility of a whole system of law, because the Magistrate in *The Silver Box* omitted to sentence a rich young man for an offence with which he was not charged; or because the sentimental embezzlement of a solicitor's clerk in *Justice* was punished, rather than rewarded, by society. But Mr. Galsworthy's case in *Strife* is unanswerable, and his dramatic handling of it is quite impeccable. Any economic system which maintains in a position of authority employers of labour who resemble Mr. Norman McKinnel as closely as "John Anthony" stands condemned. The author starts with our intellectual sympathies, and we are prepared to let him prove his point in three Acts. Yet he does better. Any Fabian could demonstrate the farce of the existing order in British industry. But it takes a dramatist to make a tragedy of it.

The rare grip of Mr. Galsworthy's plays is only half due to their subjects. They owe the other half to the fine concentration of his method. You will never find in any one of his pieces that there is a word in the mouth of any character which is not strictly relevant to the tussle round which the play is built. There are no stray snatches of conversation, none of those little irrelevances of which real life is so full; because, if you are to state a case in three hours, there is no time for them. His people are exhibited with the one or two salient points of character which are necessary for the play, and one can hardly imagine them in any other situation. One seems to see them always in relief, never in solid, three-dimensional sculpture. The method—one may call it economical or meagre, according to taste—suffices admirably for the drama. But for a novelist (and Mr. Galsworthy writes novels) it is a frail equipment.

II

There are two stages of a writer's career at which he falls, by common consent, a victim to his critics. At its opening, when he first takes a bright young pen in his hand to confront the universe, the chance recipient of his first book for review is permitted, is

positively encouraged, to tell him how it should be done. And towards the close, when he has autographed the last copy of his Authentic Edition (with a photogravure of each of his birthplaces for frontispieces to each of the twenty-six volumes), and his publisher has harvested the last sweepings of his memory in one of those rambling autobiographies which Mr. Henry James made so fashionable and M. Anatole France so popular, in that final moment it is open to any occasional contributor to the Press to tell him how he has done it. These occasions are strictly regulated by an odd convention, and any departure from their established order involves a grave breach of literary decorum.

That, perhaps, is why Mr. Galsworthy as novelist presents a case of some difficulty. It is clearly indelicate, at the present stage of his career, to approach him with that profusion of good advice which the critical cornucopia reserves for beginners; and to attempt a final estimate of his work would have all the studied discourtesy of a premature obituary. He may seem to suffer as a novelist from the defects of his qualities as a dramatist, from the simplified characterisation which successfully presents figures on the stage by endowing them with a single characteristic and steadily over-emphasising it whenever they appear. It may be necessary, if you are to convince

the dull-eyed individual in the fifth row of the dress-circle that Sir Berkeley Paradine was a mean man, to present that Baronet, on the three occasions of his becoming visible to the audience, engaged in either counting his money, giving an old friend two shillings for half a crown, or refusing a rise to the under-gardener.

But you will find, if you attempt to transfer Sir Berkeley to a five-volume study of the British governing class, that this treatment of his personality is somehow inadequate. Your readers will not merely complain of your lack of subtlety; but they will add, with pardonable heat, that your character departs from reality for the plain reason that human beings are made up of more than one ingredient. One always expects a dramatist to pass off a simple-minded caricature as a substitute for real psychology. But the novelist has got elbowroom in which to develop his analysis; and when he constantly reintroduces Sir Berkeley in the perpetual attitudes of his avarice, one is half tempted to discard all courtesy and firmly to show him the way back to the theatre.

Some twist of that distortion, of that undue concentration of view, may seem to disfigure Mr. Galsworthy's attitude to his people. But it is an idle exercise either to demonstrate or to complain of it. One may assume that, with twelve novels behind him,

he has formed his habits for a literary lifetime. He has been given his intellectual latch-key; and it is merely aunt-like to complain of the use which he chooses to make of it. A later generation may take the charge into consideration when it comes to "place" him. But his contemporaries, if they are wise, will stifle their good advice. His work is there for them to read, if they want to; and it is none of their business to help him to write it.

But one feels somehow that he exposes a wider target to criticism when he announces himself less as a novelist than as the historian of an age. It had seemed an amiable weakness, as his Man of Property drifted into Chancery and someone put up a board "To Let," that Mr. Galsworthy had chosen to write a series of novels about a single family. If he preferred, as one felt that he did, people with a single characteristic, it was perhaps natural that he should construct a world in which every inhabitant presented that same characteristic without distinction of age or sex. It was hardly exhilarating; and one has always seemed to understand (better, perhaps, than Mr. Galsworthy) why the one character in the tale who was not a Forsyte withdrew suddenly from the family circle under circumstances bearing a strong resemblance to suicide. But it has always amused novelists to play at Balzac; and no fair-minded reader

would deny to his author the manifest gain in illusion which is to be obtained from continuity in nomenclature, from the recurrence of the old names. The suits in Mr. Arnold Bennett's "Five Towns" seem ever so much more real, when one is told that they come, they always come, from Shillitoe's.

But in his Preface (M. Anatole France would call it, with Latin logic, a *postface*) to the collected Forsyte novels the author is inclined to claim that the series has a broader significance as a document of social history. At that point one ventures, with all diffidence, to demur. It may be, it must be, that so sensitive an observer as Mr. Galsworthy has in his mind a picture of the late Victorian age, of "folk in frock coats and furbelows and a gilt-edged period." But it is not easy to agree that, in this protracted anecdote of a dismal solicitor and his unpleasant relations, he has transferred the period to his page. One sees three excellent examples of his method as a novelist and one exquisite short story. But here is no picture of a period drawn with the strong hand of Balzac or the patient, enquiring eye of Zola. Figures do not become typical by being called so; and characters who have strayed in from a play will hardly live in a novel merely because their creator asks them to. Mr. Galsworthy has written his tales; but they do not recreate the past. Yet they are none

the worse for that. It is the good fortune of good novelists to be read in their lifetime: historians are usually required to die first. Mr. Galsworthy has chosen the pleasanter lot.

THE SEVEN SLEEPERS

The Right Hon. Stanley Baldwin, M.P.
The Right Hon. J. Ramsay Macdonald, M.P.
The Right Hon. Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, K.G.
The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.
The Right Hon. Austen Chamberlain, M.P.
The Lords Robert and Hugh Cecil, M.P.

THE RIGHT HON. STANLEY BALDWIN, M.P.

Mais comment? c'était un cœur d'or!
DU COTÉ DE CHEZ SWANN.

LORD BEACONSFIELD raised peacocks; Mr. Joseph Chamberlain grew orchids; Mr. Stanley Baldwin breeds pigs. Perhaps it is a symbol. That judicious man may, for all that I know, have selected his favourite pursuit as a vivid, an unmistakable image of the simple appetites which govern modern politics. At any rate, it was almost the only fact about him which public enquiry could elicit in the eager, hurrying days that followed the tragic eclipse of Mr. Bonar Law. Pigs and a brisk, determined geniality were the banners behind which Mr. Baldwin marched into office; and (since all public men are genial) one must make the most of pigs.

They have a meaning. There is, for the anxious interpreter of politicians, much virtue in a pig. The trailing feathers on Mr. Disraeli's terrace at Hughenden got into his foreign policy. Mr. Chamberlain's

Imperialism was heavily infected with the exotic splendours of his greenhouse. And who can say but that Mr. Baldwin may yet fulfil the promise of his pigs? Those curves, that ample diet, those regular hours for meals are surely an earnest. They seem, as one strolls in spirit round his piggeries, to point straight to the humble ideals of modern statesmanship. Our masters' duty, whether they are framing a trade policy for Europe, or pruning the Honours List, is to feed the multitude. Economics, party discipline, and public interest all point in the same direction; and as a hungry nation gathered expectantly round the pig-tub, Mr. Baldwin needed all his experience of feeding-time. Peacocks, in our prevailing drab, would be incongruous; and one is bound, as a patriot, to distrust orchids for the gaudy foreigners that they are. But there is safety in pigs.

In yet another aspect they conform to the high tradition of English public life. One has rarely known a statesman in these islands who was not racked by a distinguished craving to be something else. Sometimes our Premier is a *manqué* golf professional. Once (and a Peer, too) he had scientific leanings. But mostly he sits among the red boxes at Westminster and sighs for the English countryside. These thwarted longings are an invariable indication of political aptitude; perhaps it has some

unpleasant explanation in psycho-analysis. Mr. Disraeli, who died in politics at seventy-six, craved only for the conversation of his fellow-farmers in Buckinghamshire. Lord Palmerston, who died in office at eighty, was believed to know no pleasure except in Hampshire. And Mr. Gladstone, who only retired at eighty-five in deference to the failure of eyes and ears and the successful persuasion of his united colleagues, found his sole happiness in the crash of falling trees at Hawarden. The English always prefer someone, who is something, to be really something else: this is called the amateur tradition, and is a sure safeguard against the grave menace of professionalism. Their statesmen are recruited from the crowded ranks of successful competitors at local flower-shows; their favourite critic of the drama is a Civil Servant; and their one Homeric scholar is a banker. It is a grand tradition of inconsequence.

Perhaps it complicates careers a little. The path of promotion seems to go round strange corners; and ambitious young men qualify for politics with a course of mixed farming. If they are sincere in their indifference to public affairs, they will arrive at the Front Bench without the embarrassment of any expert knowledge. If not, they will probably be found out before they get there and relegated to some humbler calling, where experts are in request. The rules of

the English game will not tolerate the inclusion of a Player among the Gentlemen; and in the main this odd proceeding works out with tolerable results. The new Prime Minister followed tradition closely, when he gave loud expression to that distaste for public life, which he appears to share with nearly all his colleagues on both Front Benches. His countrymen were undismayed by the confession. Foreign statesmen have frequently to simulate a faint interest in politics. But an Englishman can govern half the world whilst he is thinking all the time about something else. Indeed, his rustic instincts may even have stood Mr. Baldwin in good stead; since there were other candidates for the post, and conceivably their qualifications were inferior in this essential point. Perhaps Lord Curzon was too interested in affairs to merit the appointment: somehow, one does not see him in a smock. But Mr. Baldwin had the authentic touch. The tweeds, the rural tastes, the mild indifference to national affairs left the constitutional monarch without a choice. One must respect tradition. To Mr. Gladstone, his trees; to Mr. Baldwin, his pigs.

But he has, though he would probably deny it, a further significance. The Industrial Revolution has inflicted many strange consequences upon English public life. From the discovery of coal in the North,

the application of motive power to machinery, and the accretion of a vast population round the unlovely chimneys of the industrial area more things have sprung into being than a music-hall joke about Wigan and the export statistics. Industry has created the industrial problem. It has stated the theme upon which British politics will play variations for the next half-century. But although it constitutes in itself the chief subject-matter of the national argument, it has made a surprisingly small contribution to the *personnel* of politics. England as a Great Power is a mere by-product of British industrialism. Without coal and iron, Lancashire would be a sheep-run; without the industrial North, London would be a happy little *entrepôt,* like Amsterdam. But if you run an eye over the serried and voluble ranks of English public life, you will see few, almost incredibly few figures there which have a direct relation to industrial production. The Labour Party is an immediate creation of the industrial problem. It exists, say its friends, to solve it. It lives, say its enemies, by leaving it unsolved. It sprang fully armed from the rather bewildered head of the democratic Zeus, as he stared dismally at the welter of the industrial system. Yet how little there is in it of the real men of industry. Its intellectual stock-in-trade does not come from the workshops. Its literary affinities come

from Golder's Green; its promising young men come from the Liberal Party or the liberal professions. Yet it claims bravely to represent, in the great industrial debate, the mass of the workers who live by machinery. And an equal irony has ranged on the Conservative side a strange miscellany of men, almost equally unrepresentative of the causes for which they stand. The Ark of their Covenant is the existing relation between employers and employed; and it is carried shoulder-high by a priestly throng of landowners and gentlemen of leisure, while a few miscellaneous censers are swung by practising barristers, City men, and stray professors.

It is strange that so few of the voices which join in the industrial debate are drawn from industry itself. One catches upon either side the facile utterance of the mere advocate, and upon both sides the omniscient drone of the economists. But there is hardly ever a sound from the real disputants, from the men who are themselves engaged in the work of industrial production. Perhaps they are too busy to argue about themselves; or perhaps they are content just to be the patient and to hear the doctors disagree. There, at any rate, is the great body of British industrialists, argumentative in railway carriages, voluble at company meetings, but strangely silent in politics.

It is the interest of Mr. Baldwin that, in his case,

the long silence of the industrialists has been broken, and a great employer was promoted Prime Minister. He might obtrude his pigs and his country life with a well-meant gesture. But the most significant fact about him was his industrial position. His class has given great figures to politics in its time. Mr. Cobden printed excellent calico; Mr. Chamberlain made admirable screws. But their politics early submerged their *bourgeois* occupations, and they almost ceased to signify in commerce. Mr. Baldwin's case was not the same. He stepped suddenly from the boardroom into Downing Street: and one was pardonably curious as to the result. His national position was precisely that of those Ruhr magnates, whom anxious French detectives hurried to police-stations in order to make the world safe for democracy. He is the mild, Anglo-Saxon counterpart of the stern figures of Krupp and Thyssen and Stinnes; and one can hardly doubt that, if triumphant Germans had occupied the British *Industriegebiet,* eager cameras would have observed Mr. Baldwin and his pipe stepping out of a prison-van between two lines of Green Police.

That is his position in the British economy; and his country waited to see what he would make of his lonelier situation at the head of a national executive. It might be unfortunate, in a time of debate between Labour and Capital, that an obvious protagonist of

one of the disputants should preside over the State, which may be called upon to arbitrate between them. Mr. Baldwin (one can hardly doubt it) would be fair to the verge of partiality to Labour. Yet no amount of personal fairness will serve, one fears, to exorcise the street-corner suspicion that is inherent in his position as a great industrialist.

The experiment (for it was an experiment) possessed a further interest. Critics of Governments, impatient with the pulpit eloquence of the Free Churches and the more ponderous reasoning of lawyers, have sometimes made extravagant claims for the superior intelligence of commerce, for the inspired initiative of men whose best work had been done at the head of great businesses. Some of these claims were dismally disproved during the war, when public life tried and found wanting a slow procession of distinguished traders. They blamed the war; they blamed the routine of official life; and in no single case were they heard to blame themselves. The experiment was tried on a larger scale with Mr. Baldwin; and on a larger scale it failed.

THE RIGHT HON. J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, M.P.

Once and again, as the Ice came South
The glaciers ground over Lossiemouth.
A Counting-Out Song.

When history comes, as they say, to be written instead of being merely made by persons who have not read any, there will be something quite interesting to say about English politics. That, of course, is no guarantee that the historians will say it; because great topics have an unfailing attraction for small writers. The career of Napoleon is the chosen playground of mediocrities; his elder sister, the French Revolution, has been as unfortunate in her biographers as the rest of the family; and there is no particular reason why posterity should allot us a more inspiring interpreter. But if only the poor fellow could grasp the points, we should make very lively reading.

Politics since 1900 have been the British substitute for a revolution. There is a shrewd saying somewhere in the scattered wisdom of Mr. G. K. Chester-

ton that the greatest historical event of the Nineteenth Century was the English Revolution which omitted to take place between the years 1829 and 1832. One may add, without discourtesy, that his greatest historical work is the one which he has omitted to write about it. There, at any rate, in the years between Waterloo and the Reform Bill, was a corner which Great Britain managed to turn by political teamwork; whilst almost every Continental contemporary preferred to swing round it on one wheel, in the sharp movement of a revolution. There was some jolting, a little cracking of the whip, a faint apprehension among the more nervous passengers. But they managed somehow to prevent the leaders from kicking over the traces and to keep the vehicle on the road with King William IV. on top of it; and the old gentlemen in the rumble continued to talk politics, whilst their neighbours on the Continent were building barricades. It was unheroic. It was almost dull. But it was a method by which England managed to transform itself without the more dramatic cut and thrust of a revolution.

That, or something like it, has once again been the course of English politics in more recent times; and the historian will have much the same story to tell of Mr. Asquith and his sprightlier contemporaries as he had about Lord Grey and the men of the first

Reform Bill. There is once more the slow drift of parties, the eddy of personalities which took the British Empire and its mixed cargo out of the world-revolution of 19 . . . one forgets the date. The story is queer and crowded and full of earnest gentlemen in pince-nez. One can see the odd transformation of the Victorian scene, which followed the Boer War; the marshalling of the new forces in the wings, as Mr. Balfour lounged in the centre of the stage; and then the slow surge of the crowds, which filled the scene and elbowed the principals off the boards. One hopes that the ending, when it comes, will be a happy ending. But it is a strange story.

Unhappily for our pride, perhaps, we shall never read it; because it is a dismal convention that history is never written until it is not worth reading. Most of us were taught at school that the story of mankind ended in the year 1832. A younger and more adventurous generation may have penetrated the jungle as far as 1886. It is even conceivable that in some of the more daring Infant Schools they have reached the accession of King Edward VII. But contemporary history will not be written until we are all past reading; and, by a pleasing and recurrent irony, it will be completely wasted on the generation which is privileged to study it. Patient researchers will excavate all the mysteries that excite our wildest

conjectures. The soul of Mr. Z., the secret motives of Sir W. X., the eternal riddle of Lord Y. will be laid bare before a roomful of bored students; and our masters will be eviscerated in an empty operating theatre. The cornucopia of history will pour revelations in more than Rasputinian profusion before our dull-eyed descendants; and a languid posterity will turn an apathetic stare on the true story of Mr. Lloyd George. They will find Mr. Churchill and his Bolsheviks as dreary as King Alfred and his cakes; and aspirants to the doctorates of universities as yet undreamt of will present theses on the British Labour movement. One hastens, with the true humility of a mere contemporary, to submit a few notes for their guidance.

The movement (one shrinks from the admission in a study of its titular leader) is more remarkable for its facts than for its figures. There is something impressive in the evolution of British Socialism from an imported fad with a slightly German accent into the accepted doctrine of organised Labour; and the rapid expansion of the party, which once was almost covered by the brim of Mr. John Burns' straw hat, is a solid and significant fact. But in its progress through Terror (as Mr. Lloyd George used to say) to Triumph it has been strikingly unproductive of those figures, by which Englishmen love to identify their

political parties. In the days when Mr. Gladstone wore a collar and Lord Beaconsfield a forelock, it was so easy to be "either a little Liberal or else a little Conservative." But Labour has been singularly sparing of such meretricious aids to the national memory. Refusing resolutely to be identified with the personal characteristics of Mr. Keir Hardie, it appears ever since to have selected its leaders according to their lack of idiosyncrasies. Inconspicuousness, in one quarter of the House at least, seems to have been elevated into a political virtue. Whilst the Unionists chose a leader because he wore an eye-glass with hereditary aptitude, and Liberal statesmen vied with one another in the wild exuberance of their Gladstonian coiffure, Labour remained faithful to the less adventurous charms of Mr. Henderson and Mr. Clynes. Other parties might seek figureheads in the rich pictorial manner of Sir John Tenniel and F.C.G. But Labour, so far as one could judge by results, had set its heart on a Front Bench designed by the sober pencil of Mr. George Morrow.

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald is a brave continuation of this austere tradition. In a party which abounds in rich curves and sudden contrasts of outline (and even of colour) he presents a plain rectangular appearance, a warning, it may be, to the more rococo figures to which other parties have vowed allegiance.

Mr. H. G. Wells somewhere denounced the politics of the Nineteenth Century as a sort of procession of big-heads from a pantomime, and rejoiced over the disappearance of the Effigy. Perhaps we are arriving slowly at an age of pure reason, when the public will be equal to distinguishing the rival leaders of political thought by their ideas without relying, as at present it has come to rely almost entirely, on the competing achievements of their barbers and their tailors.

But Mr. Macdonald's leadership is more significant than that. He represents with rare completeness the articulate element of the Labour movement. Every party consists of a head and a tail; and it is almost always the head that does the talking. But in Labour there is a sharper contrast than elsewhere between the little sentient, speaking group at the top and the vast, unapproachable, inarticulate mass that votes by the hundred-thousand at card-votes in Trade Union Congresses. The head so manifestly, even a shade pretentiously, cerebrates; and the remainder of the party acquiesces with amazing completeness in the humbler functions of the body. Mr. Clynes and, before him, Mr. Henderson were vaguely typical of the body of the party. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald represents the head. It is a quarter from which few political parties have chosen their leaders since the

Country Party acquiesced helplessly in Mr. Disraeli.

There has always been a faint touch of arrogance about Labour thought, a tendency in its leading thinkers to reply to argument with the superior snigger of the man who knows better. Perhaps they learned it at the Fabian Society. Conceivably it is a distant echo of the titter with which Mr. Bernard Shaw answers the riddle of the universe. But it is an unfortunate mannerism in statesmen. Long practice in the character of a disillusioned minority has impaired the charm of their expressions; they have sat for too long with curling lips, listening to the bandied futilities of effete and competing Capitalist disputants, and they hardly seem to confront their future as national leaders with the open brow and the level eye of assured authority. There is an irritating tendency (one has seen it in the early history of most parties) to assume that decent motives and common intelligence reside solely within their own ranks. Suspicious of monopolies, they cherish a belief in their own monopoly of common-sense; and sometimes it takes the more fantastic form of an almost Islamic fanaticism, a hastily muttered creed that there is one economic way of salvation and one Prophet.

In the superior hierarchy of the faith, somewhere between the persistent cerebration of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb and the hoarse-voiced idealism of the

Daily Herald, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald has for long occupied an honourable position. His powers of speech endeared him to the dark masses of the rank and file to an extent unattainable by the busy typewriters of the Intellectuals; whilst a steady stream of little text-books on Socialism demonstrated that he also was among the prophets. A visit to India was followed, as it so often is, by a complete grasp of Indian problems; and Mr. Macdonald added to the widening circle of his admirers that curious group of inverted Jingoes for whom the British Empire is a place upon which the sun is perpetually setting, and no Englishman, if he has committed the supreme indiscretion of entering the service of his country, can do right. The war added a more questionable contribution to his record, although it afforded to him (as to so many others in humbler capacities) the opportunity for a demonstration of high courage.

Himself a queer blend of conflicting elements, he is an apt head of a Government which is as fascinating an amalgam as Lord Chatham's. He too, in Burke's glorious riot of metaphor, has

> made an administration, so checkered and speckled; he put together a piece of joinery, so crossly indented and whimsically dove-tailed; a cabinet so variously inlaid; such a piece of diversified Mosaick; such a tesselated pavement without cement; here a bit of black stone, and there a bit of white

. . . that it was indeed a very curious show; but utterly unsafe to touch, and unsure to stand on. The colleagues whom he had assorted at the same boards, stared at each other, and were obliged to ask, "Sir, your name?—Sir, you have the advantage of me—Mr. Such-a-one—I beg a thousand pardons—" I venture to say, it did so happen, that persons had a single office divided between them, who had never spoke to each other in their lives, until they found themselves, they knew not how, pigging together, heads and points, in the same truckle-bed.

He brings to the work a sense of dignity; and one can only hope that he will succeed in imparting to his friends a sense of proportion. One can never forget that, when a caricaturist of genius committed the supreme offence of depicting the Labour Party more as a human—all too human—being with a rather unsatisfactory moustache, than as a young man or woman of divine beauty and superhuman size, the *Daily Herald* charged him with bad taste; and that the accused of Mr. George Lansbury was Mr. Max Beerbohm.

THE RIGHT HON. MARQUESS CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G.

Que son mérite est extrême!
Que de grâces! que de grandeur!
Ah combien monseigneur
Doît être content de lui-même.

ZADIG.

THE incurious foreigners, who stand about railway stations on Continental frontiers and apathetically prod the personal belongings of total strangers, are requested to permit the British traveller to pass without let or hindrance by an assembly bearing the impressive names of

George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, Earl of Kedleston, Viscount Scarsdale, Baron Ravensdale, Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, a Member of His Britannic Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, Knight Grand Commander of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire, etc., etc., etc. His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The request, which is obtainable at a trifling cost, is conveniently conveyed in book form, and is rarely electrifying in its effect upon foreign *douaniers*. But one feels, somehow, that it was worth it, if only for the opportunities which it afforded of enunciating that sonorous, that unparalleled catalogue of titles. It is not so much a name as a litany. In its determined ascent from the crowded and vulgar plains of Barony to the lonelier pinnacle of Marquisate, it is a biography *in petto*. And one has felt, in more irreverent moments, that, without disparaging in any way the artistic taste of its noble subject, it is his favourite music.

A skilful observer, whose contributions to contemporary biography have made her more readers than friends, saw him as a young man with "appearance more than looks, a keen, lively face, and an expression of enamelled self-assurance." Much of the liveliness, perhaps, has faded; but the rest remains. Yet the manner, which is tolerable in an ex-Viceroy of India, must have been singularly exasperating in a young man from Balliol with no claim to distinction beyond the commendation of the Master, a Fellowship of All Souls', and the Presidency of the Union. One is hardly surprised that contemporaries wrote wicked rhymes about him; and an inheritance of that vague resentment, of that pardonable tendency

to deride the grand airs of someone who had not yet done anything to justify them, seems to have lingered into our own time. There is always an inclination to think of his manner before his achievement; and one is conscious of a temptation to chalk irreverent things on that broad, averted back. Such treatment may have done well enough in 1895, when he was a faintly irritating paragon among Under-Secretaries. But it is hardly adequate in a generation which has sent him to India, and even to Lausanne.

In his early phases he climbed the lower slopes, supported mainly by a belief in his abilities, which was shared between Dr. Jowett and himself.

> He had [if the feminine observer is to be believed], ambition and—what he claimed for himself in a brilliant description—"middle-class method"; and he added to a kindly feeling for other people a warm corner for himself. . . . George Curzon would outstrip his rivals. He had two incalculable advantages over them: he was chronically industrious and self-sufficing; and, though Oriental in his ideas of colour and ceremony, with a poor sense of proportion and a childish love of fine people, he was never self-indulgent. He neither ate, drank, nor smoked too much, and left nothing to chance.

It was a sound equipment.

One is hardly surprised that this admirable, if distinctly orthodox, Crichton ascended by the regular route. In the days when Lord Salisbury alone

seemed to stand between Great Britain and the Red menace of Mr. Gladstone, George Curzon threw himself with ardour into the absorbing calling of being a Rising Young Man. He spoke; he wrote; he even worked. By a device which rarely fails at Westminister, he won political esteem by mastering a distant subject; and Turkestan completed the career which Balliol had begun. The Private Secretary became an Under-Secretary; and the seals of a Secretary of State dangled gleaming in a future which seemed not far distant. Perhaps (who knows?) one might climb still higher; and in the bright dawn of 1891, when Wilde informed a respectful breakfast-party in Paris that he was writing a play in French, the obliging young man offered to attend the first night as Prime Minister.

But there is one feature of those early years which always seems strange to a later generation. One takes for granted the majestic, inevitable procession of his promotion. Two generations have grown accustomed to a grave vision of Lord Curzon rotating easily in a world of red boxes. Official preferment is his native air, and the grave formulæ of official statements form his normal idiom. But patient research disinters from old diaries an earlier, more frivolous incarnation of the stately figure that brought home to England the solemnity of the East

and revived in Lausanne old echoes of a style which had not been heard there since Mr. Gibbon left for home. "George Curzon" (one is always stumbling on the same startling praise) "was, as usual, the most brilliant, he never flags for an instant either in speech or repartee." Posterity is a little apt to rub its eyes, as that familiar, upright figure takes its place among the young gallants of the Crabbet Club. One waits for a grave invocation or a severe reproof. But Mr. Wilfrid Blunt's young men and the self-conscious Graces of "the Souls" knew George Curzon as "a first-rate host and boon companion." The evidence exists; there is documentary authority, which cannot be disputed, for

> . . . a lay
> Of that company gay
> Compounded of gallants and graces,
> Who gathered to dine,
> In the year '89,
> In a haunt that in Hamilton Place is.

One might reasonably credit Lord Curzon with a dignified Muse, addicted to slow-moving metres and translations from dead languages. But posterity cannot observe her without a sensation of mild alarm, as she cocks her bay-leaves over one eye and hurries an unaccustomed foot into the debonair and dactylic measure of—

Here a trio we meet,
Whom you never will beat,
Tho' wide you may wander and far go;
From what wonderful art
Of that Gallant Old Bart.
Sprang Charty and Lucy and Margot?

To Lucy he gave
The wiles that enslave,
Heart and tongue of an angel to Charty;
To Margot the wit
And the wielding of it,
That make her the joy of a party.

It all seems, to the modern eye, extremely odd; and oddest of all that *vers de société* should stream from the pen of Lord Curzon, while *mots* poured lightly from his lips. One had never thought of him as a convivial figure; and it all sounds, if one may say so without discourtesy, rather like the Statue of the Commander sitting down to a jolly evening with Don Juan.

As a public figure he has always displayed to perfection that quality of grandeur which Matthew Arnold so admired in epic poets; and it has resulted that the public imagination, which is rarely equal to an unadulterated demonstration of the Grand Manner, cherishes him principally for those occasions on which the perfection of the spectacle was marred by some spontaneous intrusion of the commonplace.

His Durbar in 1903 cost £5,000,000 (of which, with a candour rare among Governments, fully £50,000 was shown in the Estimates). Lord Curzon's fondest recollection may be of the moment when the Duke of Connaught bowed to the representative of his Sovereign. But out of all that solemn parade in the Indian sunshine the public memory will probably retain the lively image of a fox-terrier "belonging to a bandsman in one of the Highland regiments," which arrived before the Viceroy on his throne and from that solemn eminence "began barking, to the amusement of the assembled Princes, dignitaries of the Empire, and somewhat, too, to their disgust."

There has been a lack, in Lord Curzon's career, of such relief. His progress from the perfection of Balliol to the perfection of Westminster, from majesty at Simla to majesty on the red benches of the House of Lords, has been just a thought too regular. He has lacked vicissitudes; and his career, with its persistent upward movement in public office and in Debrett, shows something of the wearisome regularity of the prize boy. His enemies have sometimes confused the Grand Manner with the solemn dignity of an upper servant; and even his friends have not always interpreted his actions fairly. When he acquiesced in the passage of the Parliament Bill, Mr. Wyndham explained that "it was all snobbishness

. . . on Curzon's part. He could not bear to see his Order contaminated with the new creations." The taunt is frequently unjust; and even if it were true, even if Lord Curzon were a mere gesture of exclusiveness, there would still be room for gratitude to a public man who walks through public life like a minuet, instead of shambling through it like a one-step.

THE RIGHT HON. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.

Pas un homme d'État, mais . . . un instrument merveilleux entre les mains d'un homme d'État.

LETTRES À M. PANIZZI.

I

PUBLIC life, as they quaintly term the most private of the professions, is a queer business, proceeding mainly by contraries. One had been led to expect a certain inversion from an assembly which reserves the title of Speaker for its one silent member; and the expectation is richly satisfied. Ladies force their way into it on the strength (if one states the Feminist point correctly) of their strong resemblance to gentlemen, and proceed, on their arrival, to arch demonstrations of femininity. Old gentlemen devote their declining years to furthering under King George V. a representative selection of the causes in opposition to which they died (under King Edward VII.) in a network of last ditches. The whole atmosphere of politics is richly charged with Gilbertian possibilities, and the best of the joke is that so few people see it.

Even when a politician has virtues (and the case is not unknown), they are mainly negative. His fellow-countrymen from time to time select a new Prime Minister for the single and compelling reason that he is not the last Prime Minister. It was, to the public mind, the sole virtue of Mr. Gladstone that he was not Lord Beaconsfield; it was the proudest boast of Lord Salisbury that he was not Mr. Gladstone; it is the political stock-in-trade of quite a number of living gentlemen that they are not Mr. Lloyd George. But perhaps the most impressive demonstration of these somewhat negative qualifications for high office is to be found in the circumstances attending the political advent of Mr. Bonar Law. His earlier phases had been somewhat obscure. A minor appointment in Mr. Balfour's administration had left the Southern public, always slow to grasp the niceties of Caledonian nomenclature, under the impression that he was a misprint. The fiscal controversy enabled him to display a certain facility in dialectical arithmetic. But when the Conservative Party was stung to insurrection in 1911 by the dark suspicion that its leader was capable, in violation of the decencies of English public life, of seeing both sides of a question, Mr. Law was elevated to the leadership. His candidature was based upon a comprehensive, an almost unprecedented, negative. It

was claimed for him, in those days, that he was neither Mr. Austen Chamberlain nor Mr. Walter Long. The claim was a high one. If it was true, Mr. Law was quite clearly a paragon of that somewhat negative virtue which endears politicians to the hearts of their countrymen. It was the leading function of Conservative statesmen at that time not to be Mr. Asquith; and if, in addition to this negative, Mr. Law could boast that he was neither of the Opposition leaders as well, his prospects were demonstrably glowing. His record was closely scrutinised; and, in the absence of any traces of hereditary right or Quarter Sessions geniality, it was found that he was free from all possible imputations of being either Mr. Chamberlain on the one hand or Mr. Long on the other. It was equally clear (although the point did not arise at the time) that he was not Lord Beaconsfield or Lord Chatham; and he was selected for the leadership of his party in the happy expectation of a completely negative person. But his supporters had omitted to notice that he was Mr. Law.

Mr. Bonar Law in 1911 was a name with few connotations. His countrymen knew little of him beyond a vigorous adherence to the fiscal doctrines of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, a rare capacity for speaking without notes, and an unimpressive appearance. The new leader presented the smallest possible target to

the caricaturists. A harassed face and a clipped moustache were a poor substitute for the rich curves of Mr. Balfour; his hair lay shamefully close to his head; his feet (*proh pudor!*) were rarely on the despatch-box; his hands (αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπε) never sought the lapels of his coat in the unforgettable, the Arthurian quest. Even his golf (for he played golf) was the recreation of a City man, where once Mr. Balfour's had been an elegant idiosyncrasy. The public mind was slow to grasp the uneventful outline of his figure; even the invention of Mr. Max Beerbohm was reduced to a couple of Scotticisms about his accent in the later taste of Doctor Johnson.

But quite gradually his reputation began to gather on the political horizon in a more positive shape. His capacity as a fluent debater was sharpened by leadership into a tone of acerbity, which harmonised admirably with the increasing bitterness of party differences in the years between the Parliament Act and the war. His manner was excellently adapted to the leadership of an acrimonious Opposition; and the Scottish mannerism of emphasising every word in a sentence passed unnoticed in the times when it was the sole duty of a Unionist leader to emphasise every word that he spoke. Those were the brave days of heroics about Ulster, when an eminent lawyer displayed, as Macaulay wrote of someone else, "a won-

derful skill in grazing the edge of treason"; and if Mr. Law's slighter utterance seemed to sound almost treble to Sir Edward Carson's bass, his resolute guidance of a delighted party towards the last ditch was a contribution lacking, perhaps, in originality, but of genuine significance to the history of Ireland. There can be little doubt that in 1914 Mr. Law saved his countrymen from the menace of a constitutional Ireland at their gates; and in that moment of triumph his adjustment of the Irish problem was stereotyped for five years by the timely outbreak of war.

Historians, with the advantage (as well as the greater comfort) of living after the event, rarely fail to appreciate a war. It gives tone to a period. It affords opportunities for vivid description, for dramatic characterisation, which are sadly lacking in those less eventful ages in which quite a large proportion of the civil population are permitted to die in their beds. Figures in war-time have a way of looming up grandly in outline against the red blaze of the world, of casting long shadows in the hard light of the conflagration, of looking uncommonly well in those Estimates and Appreciations in which they are customarily embalmed by a simple-minded posterity. Recent memory is overcrowded with examples of harmless gentlemen "caught," as a mild-eyed French Ambassador wrote of his alarming experiences in

1870, "in the front row in an immense and painful national catastrophe," and deriving from their awkward situation an added impressiveness. They could never have found it in a more normal career; but, seen against the vivid background of war, the little figures throw longer shadows. The meekest of us can somehow manage to look effective on the Brocken. The glare, the cries, the queer shapes help a man somehow to strike a bolder attitude; strange lights play on him, and his shadow falls across history with a sharper outline. That, or something like it, seems, as one studies the recent past, to have come to Mr. Bonar Law in war-time. Dexterity with fiscal figures will not pass a man into Valhalla; and the dapper gentleman who sat in Mr. Balfour's seat seemed scarcely to have passed beyond the eminence of a respectable partisan. But as an honourable leader of Opposition standing behind ministers when they took a sudden, dreadful plunge, a party leader taking his followers into a Ministry of All the Talents, and a minister serving with surprising loyalty under a Premier whom he had consistently reviled, his figure begins to gain from the glowing wildness of political scenery in time of war, until at last he emerges under Mr. Lloyd George into the bright light of the later stages, with his patient manner and his anxious eye, as the second citizen in England. History, which has

forgotten the names of two of the three Consuls of the French Republic, may fumble a little to remember Mr. Bonar Law. If it does, he will be the victim of his own genius for collaboration. How far he helped to play a decisive, if questionable, part in the formation of that singular team cannot be said; since the mysteries of December 1916 are still Eleusinian. Yet he leaves a name for unselfishness in war-time politics, when protestations of self-sacrifice were far more numerous than examples of it.

As a type, he possesses an even larger significance. England in war-time was obsessed with a queer taste in masters. Foreigners might have recourse to the obvious expedient of government by persons of official experience, by soldiers with a professional familiarity with war, or by administrators with a professional familiarity with government. But this timorous course made no appeal to England; and the adventurous mood, which sends her bank-clerks scrambling up mountains in Switzerland, set the public mind searching for an unproved lode of statesmanship in the City. There was a quest, beside which the quest of the Grail is an exact science, for national leaders among the business men. A kind (but, it is to be feared, a purely temporary) oblivion covered the sad fact that their intelligence had made a pitiable failure of the one public problem of which they had pre-

viously had charge—of the relations of employers with their workpeople—and all England went eagerly through the commercial world, searching for men of Push (as the old phrase ran) and Go. They came; they pushed; and, fortunately, in almost every case they went. The brief experiment of business men in public life was not, one fears, successful. The judicious Mr. Burke had already foreseen the advent of those commercial advisers "who were to merit in flatteries and to be paid in contracts." For a short, glorious interlude there was a rich flavour of cigars in Whitehall, and the long automobiles stood respectfully outside the doors of Ministries. But as the Honours Lists slowly filled with unfamiliar names, the gentlemen, who had been swept into public life by cheering crowds, were bowed quietly out to the City again by the College of Heralds.

Yet there was sense, as there is always sense, in the popular choice. It was imperative, when the world was convulsed with the horror of war, that the nation's course should be steered by impassive hands, by helmsmen unaware of the great icebergs looming behind the fog, by persons bereft by nature of all imagination. A more sensitive intelligence might set the hands shaking; and there was a sudden call for stolidity. It was to be found in board-rooms; and there the nation found it. Mr. Law was a clear type

of the business man in politics. There had been business men at Westminster before. Mr. Chamberlain had scared the subjects of Queen Victoria by making screws. But he early ceased, even Mr. W. H. Smith had ceased, to apply the routine intelligence of business to public affairs. They had become public men. The need in war-time was for the heavier touch of business; and it was nowhere better seen than in the direct simplicity with which Mr. Law and his friends handled the helm. Perhaps they knew, perhaps they did not know, what they were doing. Perhaps it was better that they should not. Their statues, when we come to erect them, will not look impressive, because no sculptor is any good at trousers; and it is not an easy thing to put railway managers in togas. But, in spite of their spectacular disadvantages, they will cut quite a figure in history; and somewhere near the head of the commercial *Sieges-Allee* will come the spare figure of Mr. Bonar Law.

II

He became Prime Minister of England for the simple and satisfying reason that he was not Mr. Lloyd George. At an open competition in the somewhat negative exercise of not being Mr. Lloyd George that was held in November 1922, Mr. Law was found to be more indubitably not Mr. Lloyd

George than any of the other competitors; and in consequence, by the mysterious operation of the British Constitution, he reigned in his stead until, a little tragically, he was eclipsed.

THE RIGHT HON. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, M.P.

Voici le sabre de mon père.
LA GRANDE-DUCHESSE DE GEROLSTEIN.

MR. PITT was the son of Lord Chatham; Dumas *fils* was the son of Dumas *père;* and Mr. Austen Chamberlain is the son of Mr. Chamberlain. The fact of his paternity, although it is almost sixty years old, is still the most significant thing about him. Without it, he might never have worn an eye-glass; and without an eye-glass, he could hardly, one fears, have found the way to Downing Street. For the great majority of his countrymen, the elderly gentleman who filled an honoured position as Lord Privy Seal and leader of the Conservative (and, in its more traditional moments, Unionist) Party, is still the son of the Member for West Birmingham. They seem to catch the patter of his little feet down the long corridors of Highbury, to watch the gleam of an orchid, the glint of a distant eye-glass, as a lean hand

runs through his long curls and the little fellow looks up into an angular face.

Prosperity has an awkward way with the son of great men. The public intelligence is slow to move, and it clings closely to the one fact which it knows about them. They will always remain, as the colour fades from their hair and the lines come round their eyes, the little sons of Mr. X. British opinion, having mastered their father's name, sinks back exhausted by the effort. It will retain it for a generation or so; and, whenever it catches sight of a member of the family, it will murmur the patronymic in a reminiscent way. The encounter gives pleasure, because we love to be reminded of the few things that we know; and the old names stir an endearing swarm of memories. There is a pleasant rush of old stories and old *clichés* to the public mind, as a surviving son reminds it of the hats He used to wear, His favourite flower, and His dogs. There is a sharp rise in reminiscences, as the younger generation appears, trailing clouds of someone else's glory.

This peculiar privilege affects its wearers in one of two ways. If they are truculent and insist upon their right to walk alone, they are apt to disown their great inheritance and to plunge, since they cannot without indelicacy change their names, into the recesses of the Church. But if they are docile, they

answer to their father's name; and then a mild career is open to them as sons, nephews, grandsons of the great man. Yet, even so, their genealogy sets a rigid limit to their flight. The name they bear will start them on the road; but halfway to greatness it will hold them back, because the English do not expect too much of people's sons. It was indelicate in Mr. Pitt to go quite as far as his father had gone; and his career remains an isolated, a somewhat melancholy warning to the sons of great men who have ideas above their station. Public opinion, if one may adopt its most familiar idiom, will back them for a place, but not to win.

But through their smooth careers they will be dogged by a singular, yet an almost universal, hallucination. To the general eye these stoutish gentlemen will seem to be always children. They may sack cities and govern empires; but their countrymen perpetually see them in perambulators. England, in the burning words of one of her Mayors, does not forget. That is why the sons of great men are, for most of us, the boys that never grow up.

Something of this tendency has stereotyped a youthful image of Mr. Austen Chamberlain in the public mind. He is always, perhaps he will always be, a young member stammering creditably through a maiden speech thirty years ago. He has travelled

a long road since 1892. But, for all the Budgets that he has introduced and the parties that he has led, one will always see him as a young man with a smooth head, wearing his father's eye-glass. When he stands at the table, one looks along the Treasury Bench for a tight-lipped father sitting proudly to watch his son's performance; and when he sits down, one half expects a gracious, deep-voiced old man with a tea-rose in his coat (and Mrs. Gladstone somewhere handy behind the Grille) to compliment the father on his promising son. Yet that was thirty years ago; and the young man with the smooth head has lived to lead the party which his father never wholly captured.

The promotion of Mr. Austen Chamberlain must always seem a shade inexplicable to a generation which knew not Joseph. The predominance of that sharp-nosed figure in British politics after the withdrawal of Mr. Gladstone was remarkable and complete. He had set out with every disadvantage—with no father to speak of, an address in the provinces, and an awkward doubt as to the soundness of his views on the Monarchy. Across the luxuriant landscape of the late Disraelian scene he travelled, a bleak little figure in broadcloth. It was known that he earned his living; it was suspected that he manufactured hardware; and it was believed that he re-

garded the throne of Queen Victoria with a fierce republican eye. By a touch of the grotesque, he was a provincial Mayor; and, with a final lapse of taste, he elected to reside in Birmingham. The demerits were obvious; and yet, when a sensitive critic visited a music-hall forty years later, an entertainer said, "I will now present to your attention a gentleman who is known to all of you." There was an uneasy stir among the assembled subjects of King Edward.

> We thought of winning jockeys, of aeroplanists, of foreign Ministers, and of His Majesty the King. The entertainer turned suddenly round and presented us with a cocked-up nose, an eye-glass, and an orchid. And from the very places whence there had burst forth an applause of Mr. Lloyd George so loud that we had imagined it could not have been surpassed—from those very upper parts of the house there burst forth cries, howls, stamping of feet—a noise of enthusiasm such as reduced the approbation of Mr. Lloyd George to a faint platonic sound.

That was the tribute of British gratitude for the disappointment of Ireland and the suppression of the Boer Republics. Almost (but not quite) the people of England were moved to reverse their fiscal system as a monument to that singular career of political negation. But, instead, they offered to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain the rare prize of universal recognition. Mr. Balfour, Mr. Asquith, even Lord Salis-

bury, might walk unnoticed down the street; but a fur-collar and an eye-glass sufficed to collect a crowd and draw a cheer. Mr. Chamberlain left his son as a legacy to the British people; and, in a sense, they have erected him as a monument to his father. All that they ask (and, if malice is to be believed, nearly all that they get) is an eye-glass and a familiar look. It is, for Mr. Austen Chamberlain, a hard (and yet an easy) fate.

His qualities can never be judged on their own merits. When he is shrewd, it is his father's shrewdness. When he shows character (and at the India Office he once gave an honourable display of it), it is his father's character. His name, it would seem, ensured him a position. But, having raised him to it, his name quite firmly held him back from rising higher, kept him, as it were, at a respectable height of secondary eminence befitting an hereditary office-holder. It is an unkind destiny, which must console men whose maiden speeches are not made to listening fathers on Front Benches or acclaimed by old friends of the family at the despatch-box.

Yet there is more in Mr. Chamberlain's career than the customary promotion of a *fils de famille*. One can see, as it passes by, a singular succession of ironies which would make it memorable in any age. A son of the republican Mayor of Birmingham led

the Conservative Party, and led it, his father having rebaptised it Unionist, to sacrifice the Act of Union. Without his Unionism the father would have remained Radical; the son abandoned it, and turned the foremost Radical of his day into a mild Conservative. There is material enough in Mr. Chamberlain's record for the *amateur* of queer reversals. Yet one doubts whether he sees it so. He seemed, as he sat under a tall hat on the Treasury Bench, to view contemporary history with a calm, unimaginative eye, to see the world in terms of the division lobby, and to watch Europe from the angle of British politics. He is a sober politician, a steady man, a sound Conservative—the triple negation of all that Joseph Chamberlain was, an inverted epitaph of his father.

THE LORDS ROBERT AND HUGH CECIL, M.P.

—Mais n'êtes-vous pas bien fâchée d'être aveugle?
—Non. J'attends de voir Dieu.—Frère Joconde.

The English (one almost shrinks from the platitude) are unswerving devotees of heredity. There can be no other explanation of the vast majority of their appointments to those positions of national eminence and responsibility, which go in less enlightened foreign communities to the highest bidder or even (in extreme cases) by merit. The first question which rises to the lips of a bewildered public confronted, as it sometimes is, by a new name is who his father was. The proudest moment of a British mother is when her son displays, by eminence in prize-winning or field-sports, that he takes after Uncle Jim. And one inclines to the belief that the Darwinian hypothesis was taken to the broad Victorian bosom because it satisfied, in a way, the national craving for tracing family resemblances. It is the local form of the human impulse which drives the Chinaman to ancestor-worship and the American to overcrowd the *Mayflower* with congested forebears.

The taste for parents, which turns in foreigners to idle sentiment, is put by the British system to a practical use. It is the first and simplest test of statesmanship. If a man has a father, one may rely on him. If he has a grandfather, one may return him unopposed. If he has two (and the case is not unknown), an early Under-Secretaryship is assured. There is something singularly comforting about a rule of thumb. The French public, faced with a Danton or a Gambetta, is driven by the poverty of its tradition to a laborious process of experiment, of apprenticeship, and final acceptance. But British opinion could have placed them in half an hour, if anyone could have told it (the task would not be easy) who their fathers were.

Judged by these simple tests, Cecils start in the race from somewhere about half-way down the course. They have, they have always had, a father. Grand-parents in profusion invisibly introduce them to a respectful public, and somewhere in the shadows Lord Burleigh waves a portentous hand and mutters a testimonial from Queen Elizabeth. One could hardly wish for more. Their name, as Louis Napoleon (a vulgar person, who had only an uncle) said of his own, is "a policy in itself"; and their careers might naturally be expected to follow a becoming upward curve. The ideal Cecil should com-

mence on the playing-fields of Eton. At the University (his choice is obvious) he should punctuate a meteoric career at the Union with hunting accidents; and, emerging early into public life, he should subjugate British opinion at twenty-four with such an accumulation of orthodoxies as other men spend a lifetime to get together. It is a pleasing panorama, in which promotion runs on the easy wheels of a political novel by Disraeli (a friend of the family), and public applause escorts the fortunate descendant in his easy transit from Hatfield to Westminster Abbey.

The engaging picture charms; and one turns eagerly to discern its bright colours and graceful outline against the grey distances of contemporary politics. But at the cold touch of reality the vision seems to fade. No young Cecil flings back the curls from his pale, hereditary brow, or buckles the Garter round a youthful leg. There are no cheering crowds in Arlington Street, when the fourth Marquess goes down to the House of Lords; and close observers have seen Lord Robert speak to quite common people. England has still hereditary statesmen; but their name is apt to be Chamberlain. Young noblemen are still to be found in public life; but they are frequently called Harmsworth. A search for Cecils takes one into the oddest places. Little earnest

groups rally round their name, as though they were mere ardent persons with ideas, without a home at Hatfield. Something seems strangely wrong with the Cecil tradition. It almost looks as though heredity had been discarded for intelligence.

Yet one might perhaps have expected it from the early career of Lord Salisbury. That fierce young man with black hair drove a way into public life with the cutting edge of a keen pen and a bitter tongue, when he might have walked quietly up to the front door and sent in his card. But he subsided in his later years into the calm, traditional air of hereditary statesmanship and nepotism; and if he left sons, one might expect them to step easily into the great inheritance. All or nearly all of them served at one time or another as his private secretary. It was a mild apprenticeship for office; and one looks to see them glide imperceptibly up the ladder of public promotion, without the vulgar need of ever getting out of breath. But it never happened; and at one time one was faced with the unaccountable spectacle of two Cecils in opposition to a Conservative administration, with Lord Hugh as a lonely voice denouncing reaction and Lord Robert as the rising hope of the stern, unbending Radicals.

It is a queer result. Yet it seems to follow almost naturally from the temper of Lord Salisbury's

younger sons. They were never (perhaps it is a reproach to Eton and University College) such stuff as Under-Secretaries are made of. There is an odd, tangential quality in their thinking, which does not form part of any public school curriculum; and they have carried independence to a point beyond the limits of its recognised utility for showing off the paces of young politicians. If they had been true to tradition they should have steadied, after a few years of political escapades, into sober placemen. A straight, smooth road to public office lay in front of them. But when they travelled it, queer, intangible things called principles seemed to deflect their course, to send them shying into the hedges; and the hopes of their family became an anxiety to party Whips. Born, as it seemed, to officiate among the incense in the inner shrine of politics, they took to the hills and preferred to peer down into the plains from the cave of Adullam.

Something of their deviation from the broad and easy road was due to their inheritance from Lord Salisbury. They took from him their name, and with it the automatic applause of respectful British audiences. But they seemed to take also his astounding capacity for invective, which had earned the distrust of Mr. Disraeli for the "master of gibes and flouts and jeers," and sent his sons out into public

life to denounce their enemies in terms that were sometimes a trifle shrill. A party will acquiesce in the smooth succession of an heir-apparent, if he is content to present his heredity as the sole title to his new estate. But if he insists on making a reputation for himself like any *novus homo,* the tenantry becomes suspicious, forgets to pull its forelock, and leaves him the hard portion which is reserved for younger sons. Lord Hugh first, and then Lord Robert, displayed a dangerous inheritance of ability; and Conservative loyalists turned regretfully to the newer dynasty of Birmingham.

But the true quality of the reigning Cecils has something more in it than a harsh echo of the old invective of 1866. Their stubborn Churchmanship, the queer, impassioned advocacy of the cause of women, and the sudden call which sent Lord Robert crusading in the name of international peace are symptoms of a deeper element. One has grown so accustomed, in an age of political agnostics, to advocates, whose advocacy goes no deeper than the measures or the men whose claim they are pressing, that there is something almost startling in a pair of politicians whose views are founded upon principle. The English are always suspicious of generalisations. French statesmen found themselves upon the fundamental Rights of Man; but an Englishman rarely

looks deeper than the immediate section of the Bill before the House. To that extent two Cecils at least are surprisingly un-English. They have a strange grasp of general ideas and an odd capacity for feeling enthusiasm about principles. It is a taste which has rarely carried a man to high office.

That temper, with something of French logic, sent Lord Robert riding to the "dark tower" of the Peace Conference. He took the cross in an odd international crusade for peace; and he found his allies in places where Cecils normally look for their enemies. The League of Nations Union is the singular creation of his energy; and it rallies to a name which one might have expected to stand for all that it most condemns in the *ancien régime* of Europe. His leadership is unexpected and a little violent. Adherence to principles is not infrequently accompanied by a sound dislike of persons; and the sheeplike people who find Lord Robert a shade quixotic must not complain if, like Don Quixote, he occasionally rides them down.

There, in an odd position, one leaves two of Lord Salisbury's sons. With something of his bitterness and all his wit, they have a truer perception of the times in which they live; and (rarest of all qualities in British public life) they are quite immovably honest.

INTERLUDE

Mr. Compton Mackenzie

MR. COMPTON MACKENZIE

Of course you remember Michael Fane. He was a rather unusual boy, who went to St. Paul's for about three hundred pages. Michael's father was poor dear Saxby. But Michael's mother was not Lady Saxby. He was brought up by a governess, who was a Good Influence and got engaged to a simple soldier with one of those large, hair moustaches. Then (since Michael went to school in the Nineties) there were the bad influences as well. One remembers a wicked Anglo-Catholic and an extremely "period" gentleman who smoked puce cigarettes. Then our young friend went to Paddington and caught the second volume to Oxford; and the pleasing coincidence, which had led Mr. Mackenzie to select St. Paul's for his school, sent him to Magdalen for his college, masked under the simple-minded alias of "St. Mary's." This device is no protection for the purposes of a libel action, and can afford satisfaction to no one except Mr. Arnold Bennett, who is the leading exponent of the method: one is really pro-

foundly grateful to Mr. G. R. Sims for not writing about *The Lights of Lonbridge*. The exquisite shadow of Oxford fell across the scene and inspired Mr. Mackenzie to the titular ejaculation, "Dreaming Spires": that, one feels, is the sort of thing that Cambridge men say about St. Pancras Station.

Yet Michael's journey from the cradle to the end of his second volume remains, for many of us, the most abiding relic of Mr. Mackenzie's industry. In his beginnings he walked delicately between a sense of form and a fastidious vocabulary. Undergraduates read his verses between paper covers, and exquisite young gentlemen caught in *The Passionate Elopement* a flattering echo of their own affectation. The bright beam of his observation shifted a century or so nearer to his own times; and *Carnival* seemed to promise a new school of the Picaresque, in which pretty girls in hansom-cabs trundled across a background of real beauty. But quite suddenly he surprised his contemporaries with the promise (or was it the threat?) of a new *Comédie Humaine*. His imagination was engaged in a vast tangle of fictitious biographies in *Sinister Street* and its immediate neighbourhood. The little ladies of the new Picaresque were induced to enlist in a larger army; and he set out to draw the *état civil* of the West End of London, the older universities, a few streets in Chel-

sea, and a country parsonage or so. A wise old gentleman, who had once written for Edward Compton a supremely unsuccessful play called *The American,* was filled with wild alarms by his "waste and irresponsibility—*selection* isn't in him." But in the loose-limbed chronicle he had formed (or escaped from) his method; and he plies it to the general enjoyment on the various islands of his affection. For, like Sir James Barrie, he is an *amateur* of islands. But happily, in the case of Mr. Mackenzie, they are excluded from his work, which clings firmly to the mainland and almost to the metropolis, where there is traffic and the light of street lamps and altars and music-halls.

THE SEVEN LAMPS OF LIBERALISM

The Right Hon. Earl of Rosebery, K.G.
The Right Hon. Viscount Morley of Blackburn, O.M.
The Right Hon. Viscount Grey of Fallodon, K.G.
The Right Hon. Viscount Haldane of Cloan, O.M.
The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith, K.C., M.P.
The Right Hon. D. Lloyd George, M.P.
The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

THE RIGHT HON.
EARL OF ROSEBERY, K.G.

There are three kinds of Statesmen—dead, living, and Elder.—New Proverb.

In the high and far-off times, when the political opinions of eight hundred thousand Liberal electors consisted in a convenient faith in the literal inspiration of Mr. Gladstone, there was inevitably something a trifle depressing in the situation of his junior colleagues. They filled the remaining posts in the Cabinet with suitable dignity; they assisted in the deforestation of Hawarden with becoming gusto; they read, with due solemnity, the Second Lesson; and they were vaguely visible over an eloquent old shoulder in railway-carriages between Rugby and Chester. But something, some final touch of political virility, seemed always to be lacking in their composition. Perhaps it was because they were kept too long in the nursery. A lifetime in Eton suits will ruin any man's character; and it resulted that when they came into their inheritance, they

came like children—some of them rather like spoilt children.

This unhappy inability to grow up (so attractive in children and Conservatives, but so deleterious to the prospects of Liberal leaders) is neatly exemplified in the eternal childhood of Lord Rosebery. His long career has been a painfully protracted adolescence. Sometimes he would play quietly with his toys for years together. But at intervals, swept by those dark impulses which devastate the nursery, he dashed them on the floor and went off to mutter in a corner, leaving his little friends in tears and rather enjoying the anxious speculations of the grown-ups as to how soon he would be good again. This pleasing mutability has a certain charm in childhood; it seems to go with the wide stare and the bright curls. But in a statesman it somehow fails to please. That may explain the limited appreciation of Lord Rosebery. He has always remained political caviare, a morsel of public life which it is rather distinguished to enjoy. Perhaps the reason is that for half a century he has obstinately refused to grow up. As the long years went by, the wide stare grew wider and the bright curls seemed to grow somehow brighter above the smooth face. It is his tragedy that there is no place in English politics for Peter Pan.

In the first phase he was indubitably the white-

headed boy of a rather elderly Party. Towards the year 1880 the rising hopes of the stern, unbending Liberals were undeniably a little middle-aged. But when Mr. Gladstone travelled North to ingeminate woe from Midlothian on Lord Beaconsfield, the old prophet's hands were held up on his hill-top by a charming acolyte. The young Earl was conspicuously unobtrusive in his leader's wake; and the grateful guest responded with a benign conviction that the bright head of his tactful host would one day wear the crown. The idyll might well have ended in a graceful retirement of the old king and quite a charming coronation of his young successor. It was all a little like *King Lear* without Goneril and Regan. But unhappily the Liberal Party abounded in Gonerils. There was a maddening profusion of Regans with talent, with seniority, with superior claims. And Cordelia was a trifle temperamental.

For a few years he drifted absently in and out of minor office. It is not easy to imagine Lord Rosebery at the Home Office and the Board of Works; and his own imagination was not equal to that effort for any length of time. Indeed he seemed to be playing rather languidly with the toys of politics, until a bright, new gift absorbed his whole attention. It is the habitual illusion of persons, who lack the energy

to study the sordid detail of home politics, that their genius is rather for foreign affairs. Lured by the broad international horizons, they feel the irresistible appeal of inside information and hear the titillating whisper of diplomacy. It is so tempting to make history; and Lord Rosebery had more excuse than most men for his predilection. He had read; he had travelled widely; and if it came to wearing stars and Garters, he had a leg. Home affairs (especially for Earls) are depressingly parochial. Proficiency in them makes one, at best, a politician. But the Foreign Office is the home of statesmen. That, one feels, was how he drifted into statesmanship with a gusto which, for ten years, almost deceived himself. Sporting eagerly among the red boxes, he revelled in *démarches,* in politics, in spheres of influence. The little head seemed to bend intently over its toys; and gradually the time came near for him to take up his great inheritance.

It was, perhaps, unfortunate that his convictions on the sole subject in which he took an interest were in almost direct opposition to those of his party and of his aged leader. That facile imagination had been captured by the vague appeal of Empire, by the vivid image of a British minister controlling once more the destinies of Europe. The bright vision was scarcely in accord with the humbler requirements of

contemporary Liberalism; and it gravely contravened the simple principle of Mr. Gladstone's foreign policy, which was to do on any occasion what Lord Palmerston would not have done. Lord Rosebery's Imperialism would have been barely noticeable in a Conservative. But for a Liberal it was a notable piece of thinking. It resulted, since original thought is distasteful to well-disciplined parties, that his harmless taste for African protectorates and his anxious eye on Franco-Russian policy were watched with genuine alarm by most good Liberals. Sir William Harcourt was startled by the "attempt to make another India in Africa"; and when he sent some naval returns to his dangerous colleague—"they will gladden your Jingo soul"—he could not resist "one scruple in sending you this paper, and that is lest you should draw the natural inference that the wisest and most prudent thing you could possibly do is to go to war at once, when you can easily destroy all the navies in existence." The humour concealed a deeper discord. Lord Rosebery was suspected, with reason, of Disraelian leanings. He saw his country as the centre of an Empire, and that Empire as the centre of an unfriendly world. He regarded reform at home as the best means of fitting England to play its part abroad. It was his tragedy that, by some odd mischance, he led a party that regarded reform at home

as an end in itself and foreign policy merely as a regrettable necessity. His youth, his wealth, his sudden promotion invite a graceful reference to Prince Charming. But it seemed in 1894 as though the fairy-tale had got somehow wrong. Undeniably, when he sounded his horn, he passed the castle gate and won the princess. Yet, by a singular omission, they failed to live happily ever afterwards.

The consequences, when they came, were brief and dreadful. The intercourse of ministers had reached a high standard of unpleasantness in Mr. Gladstone's later Cabinets, which were reported by scared observers to be "very rough, very rough," or "heated and very Harcourty." But they soared under Lord Rosebery to a *crescendo* of discomfort, from which his unhappy followers were only released by a welcome defeat. They parted company with obvious relief. Perhaps the fallen Earl was a little relieved also, since it was the diagnosis of a shrewd old man that "he funked the future which he saw before him —that he felt called upon to say something on politics in general and give a lead, and that he did not know what to say, and so took up his hat and departed."

Such was the inglorious exit of Prince Charming from the enchanted castle. The talisman had worked, beyond a doubt: but perhaps it was the wrong castle. One is left with an awkward suspicion that Lord

Rosebery was never politically at ease in the company of Liberals. In the case of Mr. Gladstone, he had been willing to overlook his Liberalism, much as Elisha might have tolerated some imperfection in the cut of Elijah's mantle. But when the fiery chariot had done its work, he became more critical of the garment. His distaste for the Irish facet of Liberalism had been barely concealed before; and when it revealed an awkward tendency to correct inequalities of wealth by drastic taxation, he became frankly panic-stricken. By an unhappy accident he foresaw the same catastrophe twice over; once in 1894 and again in 1909 Liberal finance evoked from Lord Rosebery a hollow prediction of "the end of all." But the cataclysm, so impressively announced, omitted to take place; and the soothsayer silently withdrew after a double event, which would have proved fatal to the reputation of a Major Prophet.

Such was the brief, uneasy contact of Lord Rosebery with English politics. In 1896 he swept the pieces off the board and refused to play. The black mood came. For some time past his fingers had strayed to other toys; the big books in a quiet library and the bright colours of the jockeys on Epsom Downs seemed to catch his wandering attention. The wide stare brightened; and he wrote a little book on Pitt and led in two Derby winners. The toys of

politics were half forgotten, and he left the game unfinished. For a few years he seemed to sulk in the nursery corner, while his little friends implored him to go on with the game, offered to make him captain, welcomed every pouting sentence as an oracle of rare political sagacity. But the backward child stayed in his corner; and the career, which had begun among the bright hopes of elderly Gladstonian nurses, faded out to the complete indifference of a less sympathetic generation.

In only one of his diverse pursuits Lord Rosebery seemed to grow up. Racing is always childish; and party politics, as he conducted them, were mainly puerile. But the writing of such English prose as his is the work of a grown man. His reputation in writing seems to have suffered from his other careers. It is so incredible that a Prime Minister should be a stylist; and the Royal Enclosure seems the last place to find a prose-writer. Yet somehow, in a brief interlude between two Governments and in the longer leisure which followed his last retirement, he found time, even found energy, to write consummately well. Always a master of the memorial address (his later public life has been spent among centenaries and the uncomplaining statues of the distinguished dead), he brought to the larger forms of historical writing an unusual talent. The rather florid brilliance of his

style shocked those austere devotees of the German mode, who prefer their history unreadable. But his study of Pitt was a rare blend of accuracy and epigram; and the deep irony of the portrait painted by a lonely man in his Lowland Elba of a still lonelier man at St. Helena was noticed even by the bland readers of 1900. He wrote with a speaker's aptitude for compression; flitting notions were caught and pinned to the page by the sharp turn of his wit; richly allusive, vividly phrased, more than a trifle Asiatic, his prose was a full and honourable employment of ideas and language. Perhaps the best of it is to be found in a slight, green book which he wrote for a mother on that other broken column of English politics, the interrupted, sad career of Randolph Churchill.

Many have risen to the highest place with far less of endowment. And even with his unfulfilled promise he must be remembered as one of the most meteoric of parliamentary figures, as the shooting-star of politics. . . . He will be pathetically memorable, too, for the dark cloud which gradually enveloped him, and in which he passed away. He was the chief mourner at his own protracted funeral, a public pageant of gloomy years. Will he not be remembered as much for the anguish as for the fleeting triumphs of his life? It is a black moment when the heralds proclaim the passing of the dead, and the great officers break their staves. But it is a sadder still when it is the victim's own voice that announces his decadence, when it is the victim's own hands

that break the staff in public. I wonder if generations to come will understand the pity of it. . . .

That is how he wrote of Lord Randolph Churchill: I had almost written it of Lord Rosebery.

THE RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT MORLEY OF BLACKBURN, O.M.

. . . avec ce timbre grave et lent propre aux horloges de province.—Le Train de 8 H. 47.

I

Reared in the trim garden of mid-Victorian enlightenment, where the rich bloom of George Eliot contended with the more subdued colouring of Mr. Herbert Spencer, the slim plant of Mr. Morley put forth its first shy flower towards the year 1860. A prize poem on the enlivening theme of Cassandra had already elicited the encouraging comment that it showed many of the elements of a sound prose style: and the fortunate young gentleman arrived in London to conquer it (as it had so often been conquered before) with his pen. This implement was selected in preference to the more usual toga, since he had formed the judicious view that success at the Bar is always long, and sometimes permanently, delayed. It was a fortunate aversion, which had a happy effect upon his mental growth. Lawyers are so apt to

view all problems as cases which can be "got up" on their own special facts. They seem to become, after a lifelong immersion in detail, almost incapable of generalisation: and Mr. Morley was never happier than when generalising. It was the chosen pastime of his age. Those were the splendid days when Mr. Ruskin distilled a doctrine from a cornice, and M. Victor Hugo launched, on the slenderest fictional provocation, into that grand theology in which he constantly made God in his own image. General truths abounded on every hand. One met them in Mr. Tennyson's poetry and Mr. Longfellow's verse; and at intervals Mr. Carlyle angrily pelted his countrymen with whole handfuls of them.

In this happy hive Mr. Morley was an industrious worker. He wrote hard; he wrote fast; he wrote in all directions. He drove a willing pen in the long pursuit of truth, largely indifferent to its literary paces and "only," as he confessed forty years later, "seeking Correctness." His search was amply rewarded: perhaps it was easier to be Correct in 1873. He wrote with such a grave precision as befitted the particular friend of Mr. Mill. Their friendship opened upon the somewhat austere introduction of an article in the *Saturday Review,* which the younger man had written and the sage admired. Followed eight years of happy discipleship at Blackheath. The

company was rather solemn. The grave presence of Mr. Grote, Mr. Herbert Spencer and Professor Fawcett, that enlightened Faculty, lent it a faint, secluded air of the Senior Common Room, some flavour of a happy university relieved from the importunate presence of pupils; whilst at the head of the table Mr. Mills, "perfectly patient of a playful sally levelled at bad reasoning or perverse feeling or questionable act," but rarely guilty of anything more frivolous than "swift detection of a sophism or trenchant exposure of a fallacy," abounded in luminous generalisation.

Refreshed, it would seem, but hardly exhilarated by this banquet, Mr. Morley sought intellectual stimulants in other quarters. He found them, like so many of his countrymen, in France; and the *Encyclopédie* was to Mr. Morley what the Casino at Boulogne is to most Englishmen. He frequented the enlivening company of MM. de Voltaire and Diderot; he tripped it with admirable assiduity on the light fantastic argument, and in his right hand brought with him the mountain (but frankly Gallic) nymph, sweet Liberty. His French studies tended to scandalise that small minority of his countrymen which was aware of them; did not the cautious Mr. Goschen once call him, with every hair on end, "the St. Just of our revolution"? Yet they are probably his most durable claim

to reputation. It was not difficult, in those days, to be a Liberal: almost anybody could be enlightened at Blackheath. But to evoke the clear, cool image of *Dix-huitième* logic, and to retrace the graceful curves of *Louis Seize* reasoning was a singular achievement. He rendered them with the firm strokes of a lucid and concise idiom, which rose far above the writer's tepid ideal of Correctness. The polite world commended him, although he never quite succeeded in inoculating his austere circle with his Gallomania. Even Mr. Mill, as the disciple confessed with some disappointment, "did not agree with me that George Sand's is the high-water mark of prose, but yet could not name anybody higher, and admitted that her prose stirs you like music"—a singular confession for an economist: perhaps he had confused her with George Eliot.

Set in that pleasant garden, with the mild sunshine of Victorian approval upon him, Mr. Morley flowered quite steadily. As the seasons revolved, the time came (as to a still more miscellaneous thinker on the seashore) to talk of many things. And in due time he talked of Rousseau and Voltaire, of Compromise and Mr. Cobden. So the pale flowers (for Mr. Morley was rarely sanguine) succeeded one another on the slender plant, until his fate removed it to a harsher soil.

II

The surface of English politics, when Mr. Morley entered them in 1883, was undulating, but rather narrow. There was an odd shortage of those Questions, upon which the public mind delighted (in the intervals of discussing the equestrian prowess of Mr. Fred Archer and the contrasted charms of the Misses Nellie Farren and Kate Vaughan) to exercise itself. The Eastern Question appeared to have been buried by a grateful nation in the grave of Lord Beaconsfield. The Egyptian Question had been settled for most right-thinking Englishmen by the reckless gallantry of the Mediterranean Fleet in bombarding at Alexandria some coast-defences manned entirely by Egyptians; and any doubts that may have lingered were shortly dissipated by the still more fabulous achievement of Sir Garnet Wolseley in spending a night in the desert with the Household Brigade and routing Arabi Pasha before dawn at Tel-el-Kebir. Only two questions seemed to remain: the Irish Question and Mr. Gladstone. There were unpleasant moments when the first obtruded itself; but the second was incomparably the more fascinating. Quite suddenly the future of England had come to depend almost entirely upon the incalculable ratiocinations of that indomitable old gentleman. A few years earlier he

had withdrawn from public life; and for a brief interval he loomed vaguely in the background of politics, as one of those isolated, faintly Druidical figures of retired leaders, in which the history of Liberalism abounds. But his triumphant, his positively Arthurian, his almost Messianic return in 1880, had filled the public mind with a strange sense of his power. The old man had spoken to a few cheering crowds in Scotland; and the bright fabric of Disraelian Imperialism had faded, had wavered, had melted like mist in the morning sun. Perhaps he had only the good fortune of Chantecler, who crowed and the dawn came. Or perhaps . . . It was just that uncertainty, and the vague fear of an old statesman who had kissed hands with his sovereign when most of his followers were in the nursery, that almost effaced the intelligence of Liberalism beneath the rather awful image of its leader. Adult politicians, even ministerial colleagues, tended disastrously to leave the whole of their thinking to the Prime Minister and to walk by the intermittent glare of revelations from the storm-wrapped summit of that political Sinai. They were no longer, it seemed, the reasoning adherents of a body of sound doctrine: they were just followers of Mr. Gladstone. It was a grave distortion of the tradition of party leadership, which is still capable of doing harm in England.

Ireland and Mr. Gladstone were the two problems of English politics in 1883; and Mr. Morley's main political interest in the first was soon transferred, by the drift of events, to the second. At the outset he was a friendly colleague of that lively Radical, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. But their paths diverged when their leader arrived abruptly, after forty years of reflection, at a simple solution of the Irish Question. Perhaps it is fair to add that his countrymen took eighty years to reach the same conclusion. Mr. Morley was the appointed instrument to advocate and to apply the new policy. He became the rather tentative dove that fluttered between Westminster and Dublin Castle; and he served the cause of Home Rule with rare devotion. But that devotion was soon merged in a devotion to Mr. Gladstone; and Mr. Morley became known rather as the faithful armour-bearer than as the daring thinker to whom Mr. Mill had bequeathed his ideas. Perhaps Achates was full of sound notions about the new Ilium: but somehow one remembers him more easily as *fidus Achates.*

That modest destiny served, to some extent, to suppress Mr. Morley's career. The slender plant could hardly hope to grow in the shadow of the great tree. He had developed a dangerous capacity for singing seconds. In politics he was the faithful friend, even in those testing Cabinets of 1892; and in the end,

when his great leader was no longer there to lead, he soon became the predestined, the inevitable biographer. For a brief interval he sat once more in Cabinet, disguised in a peerage which buried John Morley almost as effectually as Sir Robert Walpole had disappeared in Lord Orford. His government of India was cautiously progressive. But inevitably he had acceded, by 1910, to the solemn and rather silent bench of the Elder Statesmen; and when, in 1914, war sharply lowered the age-limit, he silently withdrew.

Men, as they are called, of action rarely respect a man of letters; and Mr. Morley was always exposed to the dangerous suspicion of literacy. Chairmen at public meetings introduced him under the damning style of "the accomplished writer"; and the worst was that the charge was true. He could never hope to purge himself of the accusation that he could both read and write. One count alone of that grave indictment might have been less serious. After all Lord Balfour reads; and do not most contemporary statesmen write? But to do both was fatal; and perhaps his two accomplishments formed a burden under which Lord Morley's public life seemed sometimes to stumble. The French (and he often chose French models) are more broad-minded in these matters: in France a Minister is sometimes forgiven a whole

career of letters. But to the sterner Anglo-Saxon these womanish tricks are invincibly repugnant. One has seen the whole United States deflect their history and, perhaps, even inflict a grave wrong on the world by reason of a simple suspicion of a President who wrote, delivered, and positively published lectures. And the same feeling holds in England. Against that tide Lord Morley tacked indomitably on the surface of British politics. His books were never abandoned; even when his country was partly in his charge on an ominous date, a slim selection of Matthew Arnold's poetry was "Read with much fortifying quietude of mind on the glorious forenoon of our departure, on the matchless terrace at Beatenberg, June 12, 1914." That day Lord Morley departed; and shortly afterwards the world departed also, on a stranger journey. He did not follow it; and one seems to leave him, still in the Nineteenth Century, sitting contentedly in front of a lovely landscape and reading the delicately sententious poetry of his period. It was a scene that would delight Mr. Meredith; and some of the verse might even (with an apt allusion to Lucretius) be quoted to Mr. Gladstone.

THE RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON, K.G.

O sancta simplicitas.—John Huss.

To the ironical observer (and it is difficult to observe almost any human activity for any length of time without seeking refuge from despair in irony) British politics present a pleasing alternation of styles. The available talent is nearly always of two opposing types; and popular fancy, which chooses a Prime Minister with about the same degree of attention which it normally devotes to selecting the twelfth man for an international cricket team, oscillates cheerfully between the two.

The contrast is not a party matter, although it frequently happens that statesmen of the two opposing types confront one another in two opposite parties. It is entirely a matter of style. Our masters are alternately Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured. The pillars of the State, if one may put it in terms of architecture, are either Doric or Corinthian. There is a steady alternation between a severe and rectilin-

ear simplicity and the more meretricious attractions of a curving, a foliated, a luxuriant order of architecture with richly fluted columns and acanthus-leaves in its hair.

To the play between these opposing types British politics owe the whole of their movement. The Victorian elector, who spun his coin and went to the poll any time between 1865 and 1880, was faced with an attractive choice between the Penny Plain of Mr. Gladstone and the Twopence Coloured of Mr. Disraeli. Anxious Liberals at a later date found the two styles among their own leaders, and fondly viewed the contrasted charms of Lord Rosebery, a masterpiece in the Baroque, and Mr. Morley, a singularly perfect piece of Primitive simplicity. The contrast has persisted; and one may see it surviving on any comparison of the rococo convolutions of Mr. Lloyd George with the simpler severity of so many of his competitors.

Lord Grey is, perhaps, the most perfect example of the Doric order. The rectangular simplicity of his long record and his public character has an air which takes him at once out of the atmosphere of personality (as interviewers call the characters which they invent for other people) into the more respectable region of architecture. He seems to defy the eager pens which write little tittering things about his

contemporaries. Gentlemen with dusters pass him sadly by; and one cannot imagine the most intrepid Autolycus of the *coulisses* describing his taste in pets. His private life has never become public property. Perhaps it is a weakness. If a man's significance is to be estimated by the volume of printed matter which he provokes (or inspires), Lord Grey seems to slide down the list below the shriller, more insistent figures of some contemporaries.

But although he has rarely posed in the public eye, he continues to loom considerably in the public mind. It is an odd indication of his personal concealment that the best picture of him was not, like so many, a command portrait by a British journalist, but was drawn by a foreign Ambassador. One sees him vividly in a page of that queer *apologia* for his London mission which Prince Lichnowsky wrote in 1916. The diplomatic imagination was almost scared by his simplicity at home "at a simple dinner or lunch with maidservants to wait." He fished; he quoted Wordsworth; he rode about on a bicycle. Regarded as a historical character, he misbehaved abominably. The neglect of impressive opportunities (it was the Doric touch) seemed quite unpardonable.

The plainness of his private manner was even carried into politics. As a vehicle for early Radical-

ism, it might serve well enough. But in high office, at grave moments, it was almost exasperating to the numerous adherents of Twopence Coloured. Sir Edward Grey was so conspicuously Penny Plain; and a Foreign Secretary who insisted upon making history in words of one syllable may well have disappointed those eager colleagues, whose sense of a situation was less easily satisfied. You will find the whole strength and weakness of the Penny Plain method, if you turn again to that loose-limbed exposition in which Sir Edward Grey explained the position of his country to the House of Commons on the afternoon of August 3, 1914. The curtain was rung up on a tragedy without the faintest flourish in the Prologue. Other statesmen, with a reminiscence of *Pagliacci,* might have edged in front of the curtain with a chest-note and a peroration. But Sir Edward took the stage without a hint of fancy dress. The speech reveals an admirable reluctance to improve an occasion, which any leader-writer could see to be a historic occasion. It took almost the business-like tone of a stage-manager explaining that the scenery has had to be slightly altered owing to a mishap to the electric light. His countrymen were informed quite calmly that "in the present crisis it has not been possible to secure the peace of Europe." The undramatic inadequacy of that sentence, when one com-

pares it with the massive gloom of the bursting thundercloud of August, 1914, is astounding. It could not have been spoken in any national assembly except the House of Commons. One cannot imagine it in the grave setting of the French Chamber; and Congress would surely never have tolerated the omission of opulent metaphor, the indecent nudity of that bare announcement. Even in the House of Commons one doubts whether any member except Sir Edward Grey could have told the tale with so complete, so Doric a suppression of verbal ornament. The same occasion even inspired Mr. Asquith, two days later, to a restrained excursion into the less austere region of metaphor, when he spoke gravely and briefly of the decision to go to war, believing, "and I am certain the country will believe, we are unsheathing our sword in a just cause."

But on that August afternoon Sir Edward Grey spoke with an absolute suppression of drama. His strongest point was put with an air of mild argument: "If, in a crisis like this, we run away from those obligations of honour and interest as regards the Belgian Treaty, I doubt whether, whatever material force we might have at the end, it would be of very much value in face of the respect that we should have lost." One can see, one came to see in the succeeding months, the sonorous rhetorical variations

which might be played on that theme. But Sir Edward Grey sounded the note; and before its echoes had died away, he was back among the documents at his naked argument again. Penny Plain could go no further.

Once more, at a later stage of history, he had a dramatic confession to make; and one catches the same level tone of simple statement. After four years of war there was a growing conviction in the mind of the world (it was beginning to find expression at Washington) that if peace was ever to be caught and kept, mankind must find a new basis for relations between Governments. Mr. Wilson was drifting towards his League of Nations, and Lord Grey had reached a conviction that international organisation was the one hope of the world. It seemed a queer confession for a man who had spent half a lifetime in Foreign Offices devoted mainly to keeping nations apart. But it had to be made; and Lord Grey made it in a little pamphlet, which is almost forgotten now. It seemed queer for an official statesman to sit writing in his study in May, 1918, when the last German lunge was scarcely parried, that "peace can never be secured by the domination of one country securing its power and prosperity by the submission and disadvantage of others." An ex-minister who had worked the official machinery of

international relations permitted himself to be caught in open communion with "projects that exist in a shadowy form in an atmosphere of tepid idealism," and retorted hotly that "there are intellects to which most ideals seem dangerous, and temperaments to which they are offensive." He persisted with a measured examination of the Wilson ideal, and concluded boldly that the organisation of international peace was the sole lesson of the war, "more important and essential to a secure peace than any of the actual terms of peace that may conclude the war: it will transcend them all." It was a bold confession.

One can imagine that such discoveries are often stated with a glow of language. Lord Grey's was announced in the slow movement of a temperate argument. Once more his countrymen heard the unfamiliar, the still, small voice of Penny Plain, which they had almost forgotten in the broad gestures and rousing perorations of war-time speeches.

At every turn he has played that modest instrument like a *virtuoso*. The touch is always firm; but the note is always gentle, never indefinite, and without the fine, resounding blare which so often covers a discord of thought. The gift is very rare. The naked simplicity of the Doric must seem the proper image for Lord Grey. It has straight lines, and

it eschews ornament. One cannot build villas with it. But it serves well enough for the bearing up of heavy burdens and the support of the fabric of States.

THE RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT HALDANE OF CLOAN, O.M.

It is a pleasure to me to watch the working of his trained and powerful mind, very stimulating, very entertaining and instructive indeed, maam.

YOU NEVER CAN TELL.

THERE is really something rather Homeric about English public life. You will have noticed it. Not, of course, that our peaceful skies are darkened with deadly flights of long-shadowing spears, or that our northern sea is ever conspicuously wine-dark. But if there is one feature which betrays the collective touch of "those accomplished poets, Homer," it is his taste (and ours) for fixed epithets. For him every dawn was rosy-fingered, and anything remotely resembling a horse was immediately recognised as whole-hooved; a lady once caught at an unfortunate moment was described for the remainder of her career as ox-eyed; and no hero ever managed to escape from the recurring (if irrelevant) observation that he was well-greaved, swift of foot, or a tamer of horses. The epithets may serve to give a lilt to the

long roll of the epic hexameter. But they possess a slightly sinister significance as the oldest *clichés,* the first steps in man's long, circular journey from the dumb blackness of his earliest caves to the still more inarticulate twittering of his latest newspaper.

One may detect a similar tendency in the popular characterisation of our public men. We betray a strange fondness for the fixed Homeric attribute. There they all stand in the public imagination like a line of wax-works, each frozen by an adjective into a single attitude. Mr. Gladstone, eloquent for all eternity; Lord Salisbury, perpetually cynical; Lord Randolph Churchill, remaining precocious until the last moment of that eminent career; Mr. George Wyndham, hailed for half a generation as the best-looking young man in the House of Commons—these and a score of similar monuments attest our odd taste in standing epithets. The superiority of Lord Curzon, the philosophy of Lord Balfour, the honesty of John Morley and (perhaps) of Mr. Baldwin have their place in this queer gallery. For us, in our Homeric mood, all statesmen are far-seeing, every permanent official is indefatigable, and not a private secretary but is obliging. Yet perhaps the strangest hallucination of all those born of *cliché* is the popular belief that all lawyers have trained minds.

Behind this impressive testimonial to his mental

discipline Mr. Haldane walked into public life from Lincoln's Inn. His powers were understood to have derived immense range and suppleness from the pursuit of the eternal, but elusive, principles of Equity. The Common Law may evoke from her rude devotees a certain *nisi prius* acuteness. But the subtler denizens of Chancery are believed to develop, under a more refined system, an almost theological *finesse*. Fitted by race for disputations of this sublime character, Mr. Haldane trained his powers by still stranger exercises; and it was whispered that those intellectual energies, which the Rule in Shelley's Case failed to absorb, were devoted to the high quest of that elusive Grail, the Absolute. Indeed, it was not quite clear whether his philosophy was the pastime of a lawyer, or his law the agreeable recreation of a philosopher. And in the outcome there was an impressive duality about his intellectual interests, which worked wonders for his reputation.

Few gambits are more successful in English life than a graceful pluralism. A banker with a turn for scholarship, a statesman whose true avocation is fly-fishing, a Dean who is half a journalist, a journalist who is half a Dean—these and these odd blends generally provide the foremost figures of our national scene. The foreigner may prefer, in his darkness, the deft ministrations of whole-timers. But how un-

wise to risk his independence in such expert hands. Our freer island air is perennially unfriendly to professionalism; and we make it an almost invariable rule to get our work done by amateurs. Our revolutions are mostly made by country gentlemen from Huntingdon or by members of noble Whig families in their spare time; our laws are passed by persons whose first qualification is that they know none; our books are written for us by real ladies and gentlemen in the too frequent intervals of their more reputable callings. So Mr. Haldane was in the true tradition, when he chose to unravel the riddle of the universe between the rising of the Court and a five-thirty consultation.

He has always struck a note of strenuous cerebration; and perhaps his touch was somewhat assisted by his origin. There is something a little conscious about the mental processes of the Scot; he thinks well and clearly, but with a gratified awareness that he *is* thinking. Mr. Haldane, it seemed, was a Scot: so Mr. Haldane thought. But this equipment seemed to leave him still unsatisfied; and with a vigorous gesture he assumed the yet more impressive *insignia* of a Teutonic thinker. Perhaps there is nothing in the whole world which so announces itself as the cerebration of a German. He thinks, so to say, at the top of his voice. He reflects in a silence which positively

deafens the onlookers. Thought becomes his first, his sole pursuit; it is his substitute for food, for drink, for *coiffure,* almost for clothing. Casting himself for this impressive part, Mr. Haldane played it to perfection. He became a synonym for intellect, an embodiment of pure ideas; and an unsympathetic party leader consigned him, with rather boisterous humour, to the War Office.

As a practical joke, it was a conspicuous failure. But as a piece of administration, it enjoyed a singular success. This peaceful, middle-aged gentleman, whose attention hitherto appeared to have strayed uncertainly between professional *minutiæ* and the Hegelian mysteries, took the British Army to pieces as though it had been a clock; and then (a more unusual feat) he put it together again, so that it would really go. It went. In the fulness of time it went to France. But it could hardly have gone there, unless Mr. Haldane had recreated it in the form of an Expeditionary Force. And it would not have stayed there long, if Mr. Haldane had not supplied it with a General Staff, re-armed it with a quick-firing field gun, and supplemented it with the organised reserve of the Territorial Force. His occupation of the War Office was a remarkable application of mind to matter. But perhaps he was a little fortunate in his matter: one does not find Sir Ian Hamilton for Adjutant-

General every day of the administrative week. So there was an ample supply of straw in the Office for Mr. Haldane's bricks. But, at least, he built well with them.

A brisk turn of the wheel sent him from Whitehall to the Woolsack and projected him into the House of Lords with a peerage, which became him almost as ill as Mr. Morley's. As Lord Chancellor, he comported himself with less advertised brilliance than has lately become conventional upon that eminence; and as an amateur diplomatist, he displayed a creditable knowledge of modern languages. He was one of the doves whom Mr. Asquith patiently released in the direction of Potsdam; but, like his colleagues, he returned to the perch slightly ruffled and without an olive-branch. Perhaps it was quite as well that he had done his work at the War Office; and when he walked back into the building on an August day in 1914 and pushed the levers over, the new machine worked smoothly. It was, as a resourceful soldier once said to Alice, his own invention.

But public opinion was never quite reconciled to the surprise of receiving the gift of a new army at the hands of a Chancery leader; and, as the war deepened, it preferred to remember him in his more irritating character of a Teutonic *savant*. The result was the most malicious onslaught and the most

unmerited retirement of modern times; and Lord Haldane was left, waiting patiently for recognition. He beguiled the interval with a further recourse to his favourite pursuit of cerebration; and as a new faction had arisen in the State which announced its mental activity with more than Scottish, with almost Teutonic pride, he gravitated uncertainly in the direction of the Labour Party. The union, so to say, was hardly regularised. But in a quite informal manner the decorous figure of a Hegelian ex-Lord Chancellor shed a mild lustre on the youngest party, whilst this association with the Left afforded pleasing evidence of his intellectual activity. Other Liberals have felt the same temptation. No other party decorates its leading minds with the proud title of Intellectuals: and perhaps that lure was too powerful to be resisted by Lord Haldane.

THE RIGHT HON. H. H. ASQUITH, K.C., M.P.

Mr. Barnabas: I am a very patient man.
BACK TO METHUSELAH.

THERE are some actors to whom the most important part of any theatre is the gallery. The stalls may yawn; the boxes may indulge in discreet conversation; and the dress-circle may exchange audible information about the trains for home. But so long as the attention of the gallery is riveted, they will die (histrionically) happy. Those remote and turbulent auditors, unseen behind the glare of the footlights and the black distances of a great theatre, are the sole object of all their art. For them every note is forced, and every sweeping gesture takes on a broader sweep. Their eyes are flattered by a garish make-up, which dazzles the front seats by its crudity; and the thundering voice, which deafens the stalls, sounds pleasantly in their ears. That is how any actor, who is intent upon earning their vociferous suffrages, plays to the gallery. Not so, not in the least so, if his design is to please the more expensive seats.

The same disparity of method can be observed in public life. In politics, as upon the concert platform, one performer may devote a lifetime of effort and ingenuity to the captivation of crowds. The voice, the pen, the printing-press, the arts of facial expression, the very forces of Nature are pressed into his service; and he will emerge triumphant with a national, a world-wide, almost a Los Angelic reputation, before which jockeys turn pale and operatic *divas* reproach their press-agents. Another may prefer a quieter style, which satisfies the stalls, but leaves the gallery silent. This method earns a limited esteem from those around him. Connoisseurs approve; critics are comfortably certain that there will be no surprises. Assemblies, of which he is a member, hear him with respect. But there are no crowds in the street outside to cheer the familiar outline of his hat. One method or the other (for they can hardly be combined) must be adopted. It is a choice of roads which lies before every young political Hercules. And it is Mr. Asquith's weakness (or, perhaps, his strength) that he has chosen the second.

Publicity is, for a politician, the line of least resistance. In a party leader it may sometimes be a duty; and in avoiding it he has manifestly followed his private inclination against the stream of public life. The warmest of his admirers has observed, in tones

which verge upon disappointment, that his "modesty amounts to deformity." It is a rare virtue to discover in a prize boy. For that sedate progress from London to Balliol, from Balliol to the Bar, and from the Bar to Downing Street exposes him to that dismal imputation. There is much in it that would have gratified Samuel Smiles. Yet there is little enough in him of the self-satisfaction which is the frequent accompaniment of such bright examples of self-help. A tolerant conviction of the incurable stupidity of other people is almost his only symptom of success.

But his public figure is innocent of all arrangement. The draperies fall round it just as they happen to; and he owes nothing to those lighting effects, which scientific showmanship has lent to politics. Rarely guilty of a pose, he never struck the familiar attitude of the Coming Man in the distant days when he used to dine at the Blue Posts with Mr. Haldane, and anxious Radicals like Mr. Wilfrid Blunt regarded him with favour as the most advanced element in Lord Rosebery's new Government. He refrained from the more ample gestures of a Saviour of the State, when he saw his country through the most perilous twelve months in its history. And when his impulsive younger followers pressed for a new departure into strange economic regions, he never came the

Elder Statesman over them. Indeed, it may be doubted whether in all his time he ever struck an attitude. That long career has abounded in rich dramatic possibilities, which he has scandalously neglected. Quite sedately he led an irritable democracy against an ancient institution. His composure was barely ruffled, when he took a cheering country into war. He scarcely raised his voice above an even tone, when he was a principal actor in two great schisms of his party, cast on the first occasion to play Luther and on the second to play the Pope himself.

That apparent stillness has evoked the criticisms which are normally directed against inaction. Yet Mr. Asquith has never been inactive. A colleague watched him, in the crowded days before the war, "attend committees and give full attention to every point of discussion, and draft amendments in his perfectly clear handwriting without altering a word—clause by clause." Perhaps it is not necessary to be always in a hurry in order to make haste. The same case seemed to attend his grasp of fresh problems and new points of view. Some minds cannot keep, as they say, abreast of the times without a vast deal of splashing in the water, of sudden side-strokes, of spectacular natation. But their more fortunate competitor, starting from further down the course, maintains his level

with an easy stroke. He must have learnt it, years ago, at Balliol.

Few men, perhaps, have been more accurately reflected in their style. The classical dialect of English politics derives from Edmund Burke; and Mr. Asquith treads that solemn measure with consummate grace. It has, of course, its weakness. The slow movement of the Grand Manner, which used to follow the Grand Tour, is sometimes out of place in a more hurried world. The delicate balance of its syntax leaves little room for "cheers" and "laughter"; and no man, who has formed his style in the immediate vicinity of Doctor Johnson, will ever let one word do work that could be done by two. But deliberation and lucidity are two rare virtues in modern rhetoric; and his manipulation of that majestic idiom is singularly effortless. Other speakers have tried to bend the bow; but one can always see the strain. Lord Birkenhead has managed to acquire a passable command of grave Johnsonian polysyllables. But his diction always bears traces of the grease-paint; the style seems to come straight from Clarkson's; and that eloquent jurist struts in it, like a self-conscious modern in Georgian fancy-dress. Mr. Asquith always manages to wear his ruffles with the most natural air in the world. One feels that he could hold his own at Mr. Dilly's table. Mr. Topham Beauclerk might

converse with him without *ennui;* his conversation would be scarcely unworthy of Sir Joshua's ear-trumpet; and he need hardly withdraw in panic, if the door swung slowly open and a great figure rolled into the room in tow of Mr. Boswell.

THE RIGHT HON. D. LLOYD GEORGE, M.P.

Oser . . . calculer . . . ne pas s'enfermer dans un plan arrêté . . . se plier aux circonstances, se laisser conduire par elles.—"La Muiron."

I

Somewhere in the West End an enterprising management has been regaling its patrons with a galaxy of fallen stars. Old heads are set nodding to the beat of tunes that have long since faded from provincial barrel-organs; and feet, which are no longer so young as they used to be, keep time to airs so old that even the youngest errand-boy no longer whistles them. There is a quick rattle of forgotten repartee; and the old faces brighten as the fun of cross-talk grows fast and furious, as it used to grow when Queen Victoria was Defender of the Faith and gay young gentlemen in evening dress paid hansom cabs with half-sovereigns outside the Tivoli.

It is a very pleasant experience, even for a hard-eyed generation which believes that light music was

always syncopated and that the most entertaining performers came from over the Gulf Stream. The study of origins is always stimulating; and one can enjoy it better still, when it becomes the excuse for an act of slight kindness to the origins themselves.

The march of Progress (it is noticeably more rapid in the theatre than in foreign affairs) is sometimes a little ruthless. Popular numbers, if one may adopt the dialect of the programme, soon become back numbers; and figures, that once topped the bill, are quickly elbowed into the wings and down the draughty corridor, that leads out into the cold daylight. For that reason, among others, one is glad that a little room has been found for old favourites. Something of the same kind might perhaps be done in politics.

The politician serves a queer public. So long as he satisfies the taste of the moment, his position is assured. The fierce light that beats on thrones and prize-fighters is dim compared with the glories of his publicity. His dogs, his country seat, his favourite flower are presented daily to an eager community. Hungry supporters struggle for his old golf balls; and the public mind treasures his lightest sayings on subjects with which he is imperfectly acquainted.

But when the change comes, when the bottom drops out of his market and the world goes past him,

the voice, that was once so sonorous when it was the "organ-voice of England," is left twittering in solitude; and its master is marooned in obscurity, like poor old Ben Gunn in the lonely sunshine on Treasure Island. It is a spectacle which one can hardly observe without sympathy. There is something infinitely pathetic about the long career of Lord John Russell for twenty years after he had ceased to matter. If only, one feels, if only they had let him introduce a Reform Bill or so just for old times' sake, how the old eyes would have sparkled and the old voice forgotten to shake. How much more fortunate was Pitt, who died in harness, or Chatham, who died almost in debate. There is the same futile, half pitiable flavour about Wellington, plodding on alone, until his younger contemporaries had almost ceased to care whether he had won the war or not. And one can think of more recent examples.

They make a strange study. Present fashions change more quickly; and within twelve rapid months one has seen a Prime Minister fade out of power into a repose which was not even interrupted by the leisured dignity of leading the Opposition. The old activities of Downing Street seem half a century away from Mr. Lloyd George. The crowding deputations, the smiling Conferences that used to face the camera (on garden-seats) and astonished the world

with bland reiterations of that perfect, too perfect, Allied unanimity, belong to the history books. The central figure, which was once so near and cast so broad a shadow, seems to have receded into the long perspective of history.

Yet it is all so recent. A few months ago he was in office; and a year before that he was enthroned at Gairloch, a Dictator who (unlike Cincinnatus) obstinately declined to leave the plough and insisted upon the business of the State being transacted at his plough-tail in the distant field. It is a singular transformation. But one can hardly fail to realise it.

It almost seems as though there had been a sudden change in the public taste, one of those abrupt twists of fashion which leave *modistes* bankrupt and turn stage favourites into curiosities. The public, if one may attempt to read its mind, had stared for quite long enough at its masters through the limelight. Its eyes were growing a little tired; and there was a sudden craving for something in a quieter style. They had been bewildered by a peripatetic succession of Peace Conferences, whose itinerary made the map of Europe look like an illustration to the Acts of the Apostles; and they longed for nothing so much as a seat of government which would stay in the same place for a few months at a time. They had been

dazzled by the intimate touch and deafened by the personal note; and they were searching desperately for a few public men who would confine themselves to their public life.

That is how British politics came to enter the drab phase of 1922. Our politicians became almost impersonal. No one could tell you the name of Mr. Bonar Law's favourite tune or Mr. Asquith's pet seaside resort; Mr. Ramsay Macdonald was but rarely photographed on a pit pony, and Mr. Baldwin's cherry-wood pipe alone survives from the rich repertory of *personalia* with which our public men were once decorated.

Perhaps a little damped, perhaps (who knows?) slightly relieved, Mr. Lloyd George survived into the new era. Once the richest, the most rococo ornament of his period, he seemed now an odd survival of an earlier style. He had still his peregrinations about Europe, "in the fearless old fashion." But he was writing his memoirs. He was even (*proh pudor!*) writing for the newspapers; and that, for a politician, is the equivalent of going on the films for a lady of fashion.

Yet the little figure was not quite still. Perhaps his retirement of 1923 was no more final than Mr. Gladstone's of 1876. But when he returned, it was with the same faint flavour of old melodies and old

back-chat that a clever manager has brought back to the London stage.

II

The most significant fact about any actor is his exit. That is why the Bad Fairy, who rashly expends all his energies on a trap-door entrance and shambles off inconclusively into the wings at the end of his piece, leaves so little impression on his public. Men frequently prepare their entrances; but it is the exit that counts. General Wolfe and the author of *The Only Way* appear to have been acutely conscious of this truth. It accounts for some of the glamour of Lincoln and for almost the whole fame of Sir John Moore. It even explains the queer disparity in reputation between Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington. Posterity has been captivated by the masterly handling of that last scene in the cock-pit, the faint voice, the anxious sailors, the broadsides thudding overhead. That is precisely what the thoughtless soldier lacked. A spent bullet might have done as much for him on the ridge above Hougomont. Yet, indifferent to fame, he preferred to survive for thirty-seven years, to wear civilian clothes, to trail away into insignificance in anecdotes about Apsley House and the House of Lords, or in sitting

to Winterhalter with the Duke of Connaught in his arms. It was a grave, almost a tragic dereliction.

Something of that error in stagecraft has attended the public appearances of Mr. Lloyd George. Art, ingenuity and folklore have been lavished in embellishing his entrances; but his exits are curiously lacking in finish. "Nothing," as a grateful biographer remarks, "could be more admirable than the industry which has been expended in gathering facts concerning Mr. George's early life." The stage has been elaborately set. A rustic stile and a few cottages strike the note in the foreground; and in the middle distance industrious scene-painters, with a few final touches from the master's own hand, display the exquisite undulations of North Wales. A chorus of village boys celebrates the achievements of young David Lloyd, whilst a village elder shakes an indulgent head over his proficiency in hedge-breaking. Welsh hymns, a general taste for the squire's apples, and village politics crowd the bright scene, until the distant gleam of two familiar eyes under a Glengarry announces the hero.

It is an engaging *tableau;* and only an embittered partisan or the historian's dull appetite for facts would insist that Mr. Lloyd George was born in Manchester. His Welsh origin has become the tradi-

tional overture to the piece; and one is loth to dispense with it. But its real significance may be overrated—even, perhaps, by Mr. Lloyd George himself. The school-house at Llanystumdwy is an effective drop-scene. The room behind the bootmaker's shop is a delightful, almost a Dutch, interior. But one doubts how far the square-faced, bright-eyed boy was influenced by the fact that the scene was laid in Wales. His native country may have contributed a welcome splash of local colour. It lent a fervour to his early platform manner, and it assured him of a clannish group of national supporters. But one knows too little of any Welsh characteristic to assert that Mr. Lloyd George ever displayed it; and it is not easy to believe that a statesman, whose grasp of reality has always been strong, derived his inspiration from the self-conscious antics of old gentlemen in nightshirts with gold sickles in their hands.

To that extent Mr. Lloyd George's romantic origins seem to throw little light on his career. They may have influenced his early friendships and his later choice of *villeggiatura*. But one feels that they did little to determine his real direction on the public stage. The Welsh chapter is hardly the first act of that lively piece: it was, at the most, a prologue.

III

His spiritual home was broader than the valley of the Dwyfawr, which strays down by Llanystumdwy to the sea at Criccieth. The advantages which Great Britain has derived from omitting to persecute her Dissenting Protestants are incalculable: and Mr. Lloyd George is one of them. Whilst the troopers of Louis XIV. drove the Huguenots overseas, their British equivalents were afflicted, by the milder political manners of these islands, with nothing worse than a discourteous exclusion from the more select burial-grounds. A natural logic dictated that they should also be excluded from the older Universities; and it resulted that, whilst France was deprived of almost all progressive elements except some ambitious lawyers and a few unshaved men on barricades, English Nonconformity was permitted to remain within the nation. It was an active, a fermenting, but never an explosive force; and it contributed largely to the queer consequence that England got nearer to liberty without a revolution than France with three. More than a little sanctimonious at its worst, it could always mobilise a mass of middle-class opinion behind any decent national impulse; and for more than a century it was a forcing house of generous Radicalism. Its moral repro-

bation was sometimes a trifle overdrawn. Perhaps it was somewhat unduly impressed with the solemnity of its function as the national conscience; and there was not infrequently a suspicion of cheapness about its popular pietism. But there could be little doubt as to its solid political merit. At its lowest, it might be Moody and Sankey: but at its height, it rose to Bright and Cobden.

Somewhere in that lively nursery of Liberal politicians one seems to find the real home of Mr. Lloyd George; and perhaps he may best be studied as one (perhaps the most interesting one) among many Free Church politicians, rather than as a solitary blossom on the barren branches of Wales. His political course was plainly determined by his spiritual origins, and he followed it with singularly little deviation. At five, he carried a flag in a Liberal procession; at twenty-five, he was a vividly sectarian young solicitor with a peculiar aptitude for exasperating the local Bench on political issues; and before he was thirty, he became member for a Welsh division on the strength of a hazy advocacy of Home Rule for Wales and a still more nebulous indication that "the day of the cottage-bred man has dawned."

He entered the Liberal Party at an unfortunate moment. The leonine domination of Mr. Gladstone had done much to divorce the party from its origins.

Its ideas had been strained through the close meshes of his Anglican prejudices; and its leaders were little more than a personal Staff, huddled round their incomparable master in his interminable retreat from a political Moscow. The Nonconformist strain was curiously effaced, and the Opposition was strangely unmoved when it was reinforced by the arrival of "the cottage-bred man." He took the floor on a summer afternoon in 1890; and the new member for Carnarvon was mildly complimented by his leader (in accordance with the invariable tradition of inaccuracy which prevails in English public life) as "the hon. member for Glamorgan."

The authentic voice of Nonconformity rarely emerges without the lofty provocation of a moral issue; and British politics in the years between the first Jubilee of Queen Victoria and the Boer War were hardly rich in these opportunities. But when the rifles began to crack on the steep hill-sides of Natal, the pulse of public life commenced to quicken. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain explored his rich vocabulary for ideals of Empire; Mr. Rudyard Kipling electrified the nation with his unforgettable invocation of "Cook's son—Duke's son—son of a belted Earl"; and a shrill minority of Liberal doubters struck noble attitudes before hostile crowds. The British Huguenots had their moral issue; and although some

of them were inclined to shirk it and to attempt a judicious blend of high principle with sound patriotism, Mr. Lloyd George was honourably prominent among his country's sternest critics. The way of the Pro-Boer was hard; but he seemed to travel it with enormous gusto. Then, as the nation swung into calmer waters under the peaceful reign of King Edward and Mr. Balfour, he was diverted to the more normal routine of Opposition in time of peace. Sectarian education, the dawn of Mr. Chamberlain's fiscal heresy, and the rich dialectical possibilities of Chinese labour engaged his attention; until the popular tide rose suddenly in 1906 and swept the astonished Liberals into power.

IV

There is, there has always been, a strange duality in English Liberalism. Its motive power has almost invariably come from the rushing waters of Nonconformity. But the machine which they set in motion was frequently a more dignified affair, with faint pretensions to aristocracy; and the wheels of the Whig system rotated gravely under the disorderly impulsion of Radicalism. It was a strange team, since the heirs of Cromwell had strikingly little in common with the heirs of Lord John Russell; and

although they somehow managed to run in double harness for more than a century, there was frequently a grave strain upon the harness. This precarious connection was balanced, at the moment of the Liberal triumph of 1906, upon the amiability of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. It was a gift of which, in the absence of more obvious qualifications, he had every need. Somewhere on the right wing of his party the trained intelligences of Mr. Asquith, Mr. Haldane and Sir Edward Grey cerebrated impressively under the occult inspiration of Lord Rosebery; while far away to the left the less disciplined forces of emotional Radicalism made vague gestures of Social Reform and projected Mr. Lloyd George into the Cabinet.

For a short interval of departmental work his light was hidden under the transparent bushel of the Board of Trade. But when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's smile faded for ever and the succession passed to the less expansive presence of Mr. Asquith, a wise caution dictated that Mr. Lloyd George should be hoisted, as a convenient emblem of Radicalism, at the Treasury. For six active years he played the part with gusto; and his career as a Radical in time of peace remains the only completed panel of his strange triptych. Those were the great days of People's Budgets, when the House of Lords, for the first and

last time in its long career, behaved like the Chorus of Peers in *Iolanthe* and Dukes were (electorally) three a penny. Mr. Lloyd George revelled in the rich possibilities of invective which they afforded; and he became the lively embodiment of the new, the well-intentioned, the somewhat unmannerly democracy of 1910, which was prepared to regenerate England with a small tax on the increment value of land and a reiterated conviction of the depravity of persons of noble birth. The easy years before the war flowed on; and there was a brave attempt to repeat earlier successes in a great Insurance Act and an uproarious Land Campaign. His cheerful truculence invested the mildest reforms with an air of adventure. But the chief impression which remains upon the public mind is the memory of an eager, gesticulating little figure and the echo of a rasping invective and an unhappy use of horticultural metaphor. Then, on a summer night in 1914, the curtain fell suddenly on English politics, and the actors filed off into the wings to dress for their parts in a new piece. It was the neatest, altogether the most satisfactory of Mr. Lloyd George's exits.

V

An acute biographer has written that the war was to Mr. Lloyd George "what a baby is to a flighty

but sound-hearted woman." It is, however, fair to observe that it was not Mr. Lloyd George's baby. Its parentage has long been a subject of eager enquiry and heated denial. But no international scandal-monger has yet included him among its putative parents. Indeed there were moments in the week preceding it when his freedom from responsibility might almost have taken a more definite form. It is strange to observe the war-god of a later epoch fumbling with his sword. Such hesitations on the part of their hero might well have scandalised the cheering electors of 1918. But it is by no means certain that if they had terminated in a contrary decision, if Mr. Lloyd George had preferred to share the dismal notoriety of Lord Morley and Mr. Burns, his career would have been irretrievably ended. It would undoubtedly have gained in Radical continuity; and perhaps the world of 1923, which is less censorious upon points of patriotism, might have looked with a more indulgent eye.

But he chose the more crowded path; and as he became a war minister, his career passed abruptly into the second panel of its triptych. All British ministers in time of war tend to behave, so far as their recollection of text-books will carry them, like the younger Pitt. They look haggard; they remark, on the lightest provocation, that England has saved

Europe by her example; they qualify patiently for gaunt busts by Nollekens. But that classical resemblance was never more marked than in the sudden contrast between Mr. Lloyd George's first and second manners; the transformation of the reformer of 1790 into the frigid patriot of 1805 was not more complete than the submergence of the intrepid orator of 1900 and the eloquent philanthropist of 1910 in the more impressive outline of the new figure which slowly monopolised the English, and presently the European, stage.

In the first movement of the war he had little scope. Whilst the Expeditionary Force was fulfilling its depressing destiny on the left of the French line, and public opinion, with its accustomed chivalry, was attributing to Lord Kitchener the military dispositions of Lord Haldane, the direction of affairs remained strictly professional. Civilian ministers assumed the humbler duty of accompanying the actual operations with an eloquent *obbligato;* and Mr. Lloyd George's familiar accents were presently recognised in a brisk outbreak of invective and a free employment of figures drawn from mountain scenery. There was real beauty in his invocation of "the great peaks we had forgotten, of Honour, Duty, Patriotism, and, clad in glittering white, the towering pinnacle of Sacrifice pointing like a rugged finger

to Heaven." But there were moments when he was a trifle inclined to discuss hostile sovereigns in terms appropriate to the more familiar depravity of Peers or landlords.

Presently the pace quickened. Public impatience was disinclined to acquiesce in its continued exclusion from the war; and eager non-combatants demanded loudly to take part in those fascinating operations, which soldiers were so apt to regard as their private property. Harmless employment was found for many of these energies by a restless Ministry of Munitions, where Mr. Lloyd George had called into being a new world of irrepressible business men to redress the balance of the old. As an experiment in administration, it was wildly exciting; as a means of equipping the nation, it achieved results many of which might, perhaps, have been attained by less tangential methods; but as a source of national inspiration, it performed unrivalled service. The public were perpetually confronted with the stimulating spectacle of a great hotel pullulating with dictators, with the incessant activities of a zealous, if slightly feverish, bureaucracy, with the clang and rattle of British industry as it executed a rush order for victory.

The English, like most religious races, are strictly anthropomorphic. They tend to embody the ideal

objects of their veneration in a single human figure. The cause of Irish freedom was represented for many years by the white hair of Mr. Gladstone. The idea of Empire had derived peculiar encouragement from the monocle of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. And it was perhaps natural, when other ministers were less visible, that the will to win should be conveniently embodied in the ubiquitous figure of Mr. Lloyd George. It was a strange consequence that the impulsive civilian became the natural successor of Lord Kitchener at the War Office; and when the nation (as nations do) chose to swap horses in mid-stream, the engaging caracolings of Mr. Lloyd George seemed to provide a lively alternative to the more sedate paces of Mr. Asquith. The details of that transaction are clothed in an agreeable uncertainty. For some they long provided a ground for party cleavage. For more it is, perhaps, sufficient to avert the eyes and to murmur with Burke that "there is a sacred veil to be drawn over the beginnings of all governments."

VI

Few men are capable of public office without the growth of a conviction that the State is unsafe in other hands than their own. The atmosphere of war is particularly friendly to this illusion; and in the case

of Mr. Lloyd George it ultimately became irresistible. The habit of behaving like the younger Pitt has frequently led British statesmen (who are easily confused in these matters) to take themselves for Chatham; and there can be little doubt that Mr. Lloyd George was honestly convinced that the proper ordering of the world depended on his personal control of the War Cabinet, the Peace Conference, and the Supreme Council. This was achieved by a strange blend of charm and compulsion; and for six years "the cottage-bred man" exercised an authority that is fairly comparable to the bland autocracy of Henry VIII., or perhaps (since he had always a taste for sea-faring metaphors) to the more alert domination of Captain Kidd. Old enemies were mesmerised into a new allegiance to the fascinating little figure that eagerly paced its quarter-deck; old friends, who disobligingly declined to walk the plank, were firmly marooned; and the solemn Anglo-Saxon ship of state put out to sea under an engaging blend of its own colours and the personal Jolly Roger of Mr. Lloyd George.

It was a fascinating experiment. British opinion in 1916 was in the peculiar mood so often attributed by novelists to young ladies, in which all attractions fade before the ruthless, the irresistible onset of a lion-tamer. His final approach to popularity was

emphatically a cave-man's wooing. Government was conducted by a fluctuating (but always personal) alternation of firmness and concession. Impious civilian hands were laid on the *arcana* of military policy; and whilst startled soldiers muttered in club-windows, mild-eyed politicians were scandalised by the progressive degradation of Parliament. The Prime Minister, in his new mood, communicated with the two Estates by messengers, of whom Lord Curzon and Lord Balfour were the most dignified and Mr. Bonar Law the most efficient. His own appearances at Westminster combined the attitude of Louis XIV. at a *Lit de justice* with the atmosphere of a Melba night at Covent Garden. And the poor meek thing responded to this treatment with nervous adulation: it was as though Petruchio had been married to the mild Bianca. The government of England was transferred from public control to personal initiative; and for six years Mr. Lloyd George supported the incredible burden. When a problem arose, he created a Ministry of it and dismissed it, with this bold gesture, from the public mind. When situations grew grave, he poured alternate streams of oil and water on the conflagration in order to retain the confidence of his two mutually exclusive groups of supporters. It was a brilliant, a bewildering, an unexampled one-man show.

The war, it is fair to say, was won during his tenure of office. But simultaneity is an uncertain guide to causes. One is sometimes hard put to it to distinguish the true effect of a man's action from the mere coincidences: did not the reign which lost the American Colonies also found the British Museum? His touch is easier to distinguish in the Peace Treaties. The ingenious accommodations, which gradually converted the settlement from a set of copy-book maxims into a *casus belli* worthy of adult statesmen, owe much to the persevering tact of Mr. Lloyd George; and his countrymen, with some malice, insist firmly upon remembering only its more questionable features in connection with his name.

Gradually the bright vision faded. The public appetite for sudden statesmanship seemed to grow jaded. The little figure continued to pace the quarter-deck; but he watched the forecastle with a keener eye. Discipline grew stricter; and condemned Ministers walked the frequent plank. Then there was mutiny. Conservatism came pouring out of its quarters with marlin-spikes; and there was a brief struggle among the carronades. At the end of it the Captain was left with a few inseparables and the black spot.

There, for some time, Mr. Lloyd George remained. Of the three panels of his triptych, the panel of pre-

war Radicalism is alone complete. The second, which depicts the *gestes* of a war minister, is still obscure; and the third, which is the portrait of a post-war Premier, is sadly truncated. One is left wondering what touches will complete them, and whether a new panel will be added to the strange series. Ex-Premiers are rarely young men with prospects. Yet it is not easy to think of Mr. Lloyd George as a mere fragment of past history. One may generally guess at a man's future movements from his past; and it is a nice problem to estimate which panel of his past Mr. Lloyd George will copy in his future. Somehow, it is not easy to see him reinstated among his Colonels and repeating the lively reaction of his war ministry. His direction, as it seems to declare itself, is more likely to follow the simpler lines of his first phase. Now, there was once a British minister whom chance and a stern old man divorced from his inherent Radicalism. The tragedy of Joseph Chamberlain was that he lived for the last twenty years of his life on the wrong, the Tory side of Jordan, stretching out his hands towards the Liberal Land of Promise. The moral (for even in that wasted career there is a moral) is for Mr. Lloyd George.

THE RIGHT HON. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

un faux Napoléon
Qu'on met en circulation.

OLD SONG.

HIGH up on the short waiting-list of England's Mussolinis one finds the name of Winston Spencer Churchill. For those who can still remember his father, its presence there is a bitter comment upon the logical conclusion of Tory Democracy. For those who can remember his own earlier career, it is a crushing repartee upon himself. It is the depressing destiny of almost every Liberal to be, at some stage, the rising hope of the stern, unbending Tories. But it is just as well, if one may venture to advise young politicians, to get it over early. These infantile complaints cause no anxiety in the nursery. Mr. Gladstone's early Conservatism is as harmless as the baby's croup. But when the symptoms appear in an older patient, one fears a graver issue. That is precisely the sad case of Mr. Churchill.

Opening with a fine democratic flourish, he seems

to have declined in middle age upon reaction. It is not easy to think of Mr. Churchill as middle-aged; but so, alas! he is. It must be nearly forty years now since Lord Randolph wrote to his wife from Naples, "Give Winston the enclosed Mexican stamp": perhaps it set the young mind running on political violence and ruthless Presidents. And it is certainly thirty since he startled his parents at the sea-side by "a miraculous escape from being smashed to pieces, as he fell thirty feet off a bridge over a chine, from which he tried to leap to the bough of a tree." In his fiftieth year Mr. Churchill is an old, almost an Elder Statesman. Allowances can always be made for early indiscretions. But wild oats in public (if not in private) life are rarely sown after the fortieth birthday; and one may be pardoned for regarding his present as his final attitude. It is not ignoble; it is far from destitute of rich rhetorical possibilities; and he has, for the moment, sacrificed a fine career to it. But one cannot observe without a quiet sadness this eloquent victim of strictly Conservative delusions.

Mr. Churchill (the symptoms have been apparent for some time) is seeing Red. That attractive primary colour has often exercised a peculiar influence upon less sensitive intelligences. Bulls are alarmed by it; mild persons of progressive views derive a sharp satisfaction from irradiating themselves with its

wicked light; but its most remarkable effects may be observed in those of the opposite opinion. It takes them like a fever. The eye becomes wild; the speech grows incoherent; references to the Third (and even to the Fourth and Fifth) International begin to appear; frequent quotations from Lord Tennyson on the subject of "Red ruin and the breaking up of laws" afflict the sufferer; and his waking vision is haunted by a constant hallucination of sinister little figures . . . lurking in corners . . . with foreign accents . . . and inexhaustible supplies of dangerous pamphlets. The patient becomes practically unapproachable upon all economic topics and sends, on the slightest provocation, for the police. It is a distressing malady, for which no cure is known except a complete rest. Unintentionally, perhaps, Mr. Churchill has taken the steps which were required to assure his own recovery.

He was almost bound, as one can see now, to fall a victim to this strange infection. Other men have seen little in politics beyond the dreary machinery for the transaction of public business. But he has always dramatised them; he seemed to regard them as an intensely thrilling scenario with at least one strong part. Politics, in his lively hands, almost became like a political novel; and he has always inclined to that inimitable view of their thrill and mystery, which is

presented so picturesquely by Mr. William Le Queux. One can never forget the hissing whisper in which he has described the commonplace operations of Sir Edward Grey and his official subordinates:

> A sentence in a despatch, an observation by an ambassador, a cryptic phrase in a Parliament seemed sufficient to adjust from day to day the balance of the prodigious structure. Words counted, and even whispers. A nod could be made to tell.

That is the authentic idiom in which our old friends Baron X. and Monsieur V. used to recount their invaluable services to their royal master, the King of Krupenia, whilst on a secret mission at the Court of M. in 189–. One feels that the words were written in sympathetic ink, or at least traced in a feigned handwriting, or spoken slowly to an eager listener in the sunshine outside the Café B. long years after the terrible events which shook the throne of King Ladislas and his exquisite consort. Can it be doubted that a statesman, who carried such a view of events from melodrama into real life, would dramatise his politics?

That dramatic instinct, which is Mr. Churchill's strength as a historian, is the source of his weakness as a politician. One can hardly be too grateful for his lively presentation of the dreary *minutiæ* of naval history. Gunnery grows wildly thrilling under his

vivid touch; Lord Jellicoe becomes almost interesting; and there is nothing better in dramatic writing than von Spee's discovery of the battle-cruisers at the Falkland Islands:—

> A few minutes later a terrible apparition broke upon German eyes. Rising from behind the promontory, sharply visible in the clear air, were a pair of tripod masts. One glance was enough. They meant certain death. The day was beautifully fine, and from the tops the horizon extended thirty or forty miles in every direction. There was no hope for victory. There was no chance of escape. A month before, another Admiral and his sailors had suffered a similar experience.

That, in the historian, is well enough. But when it strays into the field of action, one watches with a faint misgiving. Mr. Churchill hurrying to Sidney Street to cheer the Guards in their intrepid attack upon two malefactors with the approving presence of the Home Secretary may be a harmless prank. But Mr. Churchill in Whitehall dramatising the Admiralty with a large chart in a closed case on the wall behind him, showing—this was in 1911—the daily movements of the German fleet; Mr. Churchill making it "a rule to look at my chart once every day when I first entered my room . . . less to keep myself informed . . . than in order to inculcate in myself and those working with me a sense of the ever-present danger";

Mr. Churchill thrilling the Staff by asking them "from time to time, unexpectedly, 'What happens if war with Germany begins to-day?'"—these little prancing figures are more alarming. As the slow darkness deepened across Europe, one actor seemed to get the last ounce out of his part; and when he marched across to Downing Street to report that the war telegram had gone out to all ships, one somehow feels no surprise that a sharp-eyed lady at the foot of the stairs saw him "with a happy face striding towards the double doors of the Cabinet room."

Perhaps it is always easy to dramatise national defence. A signature on a minute-sheet in Whitehall which sets guns booming beyond Cape Horn would thrill an Under Secretary. Indeed the whole sea service appeared to take up its duties with a strange hysteria; Lord Fisher set an odd tone of apocalyptic ecstasy in high places, and a quiet Admiral once caught his Minister by the sleeve, after a conference with Beatty, with the queer ejaculation, "First Lord, I wish to speak to you in private—Nelson has come again." So perhaps it is hardly to be wondered at that Mr. Churchill lived in his splendid drama.

But when he transferred its lurid colours, its simple situations, its sudden turns, its villains and its hero to the more sordid background of domestic politics the results were less satisfactory. He seemed to at-

tempt transpontine attitudes in a dull play by Mr. Galsworthy. The Red replaced the German peril; and his old fire supported the vigorous *artiste* through an act or so. But there was something dreadfully unreal about his new performance. An anxious public was beginning to concern itself with the readjustment of industry; and he talked to them about the wrath to come. Solemn (but quite respectable) men argued gravely about the control of monopolies; and Mr. Churchill answered them with wild-eyed exclamations about Moscow. There was a total loss of contact with reality. Indeed he has ruined so far along the illimitable inane that one seems to see him, in a wild vision of a distant future, marching black-shirted upon Buckingham Palace with a victorious army of genteel, but bellicose, persons who have at last set their elegantly shod feet upon the coarse neck of Labour. But what a future for a Boanerges of the Budget League.

Years ago his father told a private secretary that he had missed his own chance in life by not possessing the blameless qualifications of Mr. W. H. Smith; he would take care, he said, to educate his son on those lines, and then he would be sure of success. The resemblance to Mr. Smith is not yet apparent; but neither, until British *Fascismo* finds its predestined leader, is the success.

SHADOWS

The Empress Eugénie
M. Marcel Proust
Lady Palmerston

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

THE tragedy of the Second Empire was a tragedy of anticlimax. There had been a melancholy dignity about the dying fall of the first Emperor. He struck an attitude, even in defeat. But all the *panache* fell away from Napoleon III. and his court, as his carriage passed the Belgian frontier and Eugénie's cab went down the Rue de Rivoli. His St. Helena was staged at Wilhelmshöhe, in the humiliatingly comfortable surroundings of a provincial German palace; and the Empress, who would have worn so becomingly the weeds of exile, was denied the dignity of Zenobia in the unimpressive surroundings of a seaside hotel on the South Coast. Then someone found her a house at Chislehurst, and the Emperor of the French became a suburban resident, whilst his wife sat and wondered when the neighbours would begin to call. Fate was kinder to him, since he died after two years of dismal gentility. But for her the long years between *les événements,* as she used to call them, and the distant day when she faded out of life in Spain

were an interminable, bitter repartee by Destiny upon her sudden rise. The vivid figure, which had inspired romantic gentlemen to paint pictures, write verses, or design fantastic dresses, became a genteel reminiscence of English governesses, a faint memory of afternoon callers, a dim vision among the teacups at Farnborough. Even her bereavement, so tragic and so complete, seemed to have been appropriated by Queen Victoria as an ornament of her own.

Memories of that period of her long exile are, with few exceptions, of the most slender significance. How an old lady smiled, the ghost of a sweeping curtsey which had once held the Tuileries, the sudden dab of a handkerchief when someone spoke a dead name, the long, unbroken silences when they asked her about the past—one cannot make history of these things; and it is an epilogue that has nearly ceased to be tragic, since all the characters are dead. It is almost as though the curtain refused to fall on the last speech of Fortinbras, and we were left to sit staring at the bodies on the stage. Yet an industrious posterity has filled volumes with the silence of Eugénie; and ever and again one more lady comes with her memories of that still figure in her English garden.

The greater part of their reminiscences is of tepid interest—the times of meals, the furniture, a gracious reply or so, the toothpicks on the table, and Eugénie's

foible for buttonless gloves. But once or twice they deviate into historical interest. There is in one of them definite confirmation from Eugénie herself that in 1870, when she held the reins in Paris as Regent, she relied on chloral for her sleep. Those dreadful weeks haunted her after forty years, when the French armies were swept once again along the roads which had puzzled MacMahon: "I have been through it all before. . . . The same names—same places—same objectives—Amiens!" There is the revelation that Queen Victoria celebrated "some treaty between England and France"—probably Mr. Cobden's treaty of 1860—with a gift in the *baroque* style so frequently affected by ruling houses—"a sweet little Union Jack in diamonds, rubies, and sapphires." And, above all, there is the story that when they were waiting at Dover in 1871 to meet the Emperor on his return from Germany, they passed in a narrow passage at the Lord Warden Hotel the Orleans princes on their way back to France. The Empress curtseyed; and the exigencies of irony were satisfied.

But perhaps the brightest passages are those that relate to the visits of Eugénie to Queen Victoria. There is always something piquant in the juxtaposition of the two ladies in crape. How far she had travelled from Fontainebleau and the bright days when she dictated the millinery of Europe and even

the suburban young lady of Lewis Carroll's Swinburnian apologue had

> "done up her hair in the style that the
> Empress had brought into fashion."

Amateurs of Victoria may welcome a new mannerism —"out of deference to the Queen's feelings . . . a tacit understanding that one must never be seen on her path." It seems that the august lady disliked any casual encounter, "as it would put her in the awkward position of either being discourteous and passing them by, or being forced to talk to them when she feels disinclined to do so." Thus it comes that one gets flying visions of Prince Henry of Battenberg and the Duke of Connaught hiding in strange cottages, and even the Prince of Wales dodging behind bushes in the grounds of Osborne. It is queer and entertaining, as Mr. St. John Ervine would say, to find her with Victoria. But what a *milieu* for Eugénie.

M. MARCEL PROUST

THE persistent humility of the English dictates that, at any given moment, there should be at least one book in a foreign language which they *must* have read. It need not be a particularly interesting book. But it should, at all costs, be extremely long. And although it starts in a foreign language, it need not stay there long; because nothing endears a foreign masterpiece to our cosmopolitans like a really good translation. It has been observed that other omissions of reading are comparatively venial in those intellectual suburbs, where families are sharply divided upon the correct spelling of Tchekov, and O. Henry is regarded as a sudden invocation of Mr. Henry James. But for all candidates with pretensions to real culture, the Continental masterpiece of the year is a compulsory subject. The steady recurrence of this odd phenomenon is a constant feature of British taste. There is a dreadful dynasty of these bulky despots, which keeps pace with the slow march of time. Before the war, the throne was occupied by,

had even to be slightly enlarged for, that forgotten masterpiece of M. Romain Rolland, in which a young man weltered interminably in his music. Before him, we took our time from Russia; ships, which might have returned from Baltic ports in ballast, were loaded to the water-line with Slav masterpieces; and the expression "from the Russian" developed a mystic power, comparable only to the charm exercised by the equally vague commendation "Wines from the wood." In earlier times Mr. Matthew Arnold placed on the British market a highly attractive line of the more tedious French prose-writers; and at the very beginning of modern intellectualism Coleridge had prescribed for his eager countrymen an enlivening course of

"sermons
By mystical Germans."

But one is not writing the strange history of the British highbrow. All that is to be noted is this queer succession of foreign pretenders to the British throne.

We are confronted, at the moment, by an almost irresistible claimant to that dignity. The most elegant conspiracies of our literary drawing-rooms centre on that odd King over the water, M. Proust. If the poor gentleman could ever have landed at Moi-

dart one can almost see Mr. Walkley in his tartan wading out to receive his royal master, as the boat grounds on the pebbles. And what a rush of Flora Macdonalds, each eager to accumulate those intimate memories of him, by the steady publication of which at regular intervals his friends make such a point of profaning the intimacy. The vogue has risen into a cult; and the cult, embracing the cultured masses, has deepened into a wave; until the whole of our literary taste is threatened by the towering line of this tidal, this positively Marcel, wave. Our tastes, so to say, have been *ondulé;* and one can hardly be modish, unless one consents to the new style. Innumerable Gilbertes and Albertines are being carried to the front; and alternate houses in the more exclusive suburbs are renamed "Balbec" and "Combray." Has not Mr. Walkley announced that "Marcel Proust is one of my prejudices"? Well, I suppose that he is one of mine too. But perhaps it is not the same sort of prejudice.

Believed at first by large numbers of people to be a misprint for M. Marcel Prévost, he approached the critical consciousness of these islands with certain radical advantages. He had a singularly attractive personal mythology; and for the English, who have always preferred their geniuses dead, it counted for something that he was dying. His works, when they

reached England, were almost posthumous; and their reception was pitched in a becoming tone of slightly lugubrious appreciation. The sick room was felt to be no place for criticism; and M. Proust's earlier readers tip-toed in and out with the proud air of privileged callers. That was, perhaps, permissible. But since his death, whilst the volume of his published work continues to grow at a rate that most of us find formidable even on a falling exchange, the demeanour of his official admirers begins to do him a singular disservice. Their solemn airs, their hieratic manner, their almost ritual handling of these pleasing works of fiction conspire to render him nearly unreadable. A grave company was recently assembled by an energetic editor, to whom his English readers owe so much. The intention was to lay a wreath of English prose on his grave. But one feels that the gesture was somehow lacking in spontaneity; and it is almost distressing to observe how many of the more distinguished contributors came to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The hysterical commendation of the young (and Mr. Walkley is eternally young) is apt to be outweighed by the frank bewilderment of Mr. Saintsbury, the desperate endeavour of Mr. Conrad to say something polite, and the candid yawns of Mr. Arnold Bennett. On the whole, there is not much to be said in favour of these organised *feux de joie* over

literary reputations. But how maliciously M. Proust would have described an evening party of his devotees—unless, indeed, he could not face the lamentable shortage of Duchesses. And so few of them could keep an eye-glass in for half a paragraph.

But how far all these solemn gentlemen are from that charming, interminable inventory of a young man's sensations, which was the work of M. Proust, *essayant de me souvenir, sentant au fond de moi des terres reconquises sur l'oubli qui s'assèchent et se rebâtissent.* That was the Grail of the whole *Recherche du Temps Perdu.* It is idle to object that the quest was not worth making, that the contents of a man's spiritual trouser-pockets are hardly the most appetising material for the exercise of art. That, in the dear jargon of the Nineties, is a question for the artist. The reader is at liberty to close the book whenever he wants to. But when he does, he will have a haunting memory of long days in French provincial gardens; of shadowy aunts; of church towers and the finer shades of snobbery; of vulgar little ladies and of Duchesses, how vulgar their proud creator never knew; of sunshine, and sickbeds, and concerts, and days in the country, and all the little pieces which fit together into life. He will remember *Swann;* and in that memory he may forget the heavenly host of his admirers.

LADY PALMERSTON

WHAT a pity it is that people in public life do not dress better. One reads with polite amusement the periodical laments of the *Tailor and Cutter* over the sartorial imperfections of a new Cabinet. The spectacle of a solemn leader-writer wringing his hands over the oddity of an official trousering or the disturbing tendency of the Lord Chancellor to deepen the roll-collar may be mildly entertaining. But at the same time there is something in it. One may sacrifice too much to appearances: yet one may also sacrifice too little. Mr. Asquith's taste in ties may, for all that I know, have precipitated purists in neckwear into the Coalition. The collar, from behind which poor Mr. Bonar Law regarded the universe, was conceivably a source of strength to Communism in Glasgow. Mr. Lloyd George's post-war blend of a morning-coat with a bowler hat, which was always so reassuring to foreign delegates at Peace Conferences since it confirmed the correctness of their own

selection, may well have proved a grave obstacle to Liberal reunion. These are mysterious matters; and it is only the fact that all historians are badly dressed which has kept them out of the text-books.

One can hardly help noticing, if one compares the statesmen of any period with its fashion-plates, that in the days when politicians were better at dressing they were considerably better at politics. Sir Robert Peel strapped his trousers under his boots and wore the most admirable fancy waistcoats. Mr. Stanley Baldwin, if one may trust the photographer who forms so valued a part of the staff at "Chequers," affects a simpler style modelled (may one say it without offence?) rather upon the golf professional or the jobbing gardener. There can be no doubt which of the two would appeal to the *Tailor and Cutter* as the better Chancellor of the Exchequer; and the *Tailor and Cutter,* as so often, would be right.

There is, there obviously is, a significance in these small matters which escapes our public men. We are all far too much under the sway of that dangerous heresy of the late Nineteenth Century, which laid it down that if one has style, one is of necessity lacking in the deeper qualities. That is why our historians, eager to avoid all imputations of style, habitually embalm their wisdom in a dialect of the most repulsive angularity. Archæologists demonstrate their

soundness by writing like navvies; and economists, nervous of the grave discredit which might attach to a well-turned sentence, pass boldly beyond the limits of rational speech and float at ease in the outer spaces of mathematical symbolism. Style has gone the way of staining window-glass and the rest of the lost arts; and it is small wonder that our politicians, always sensitive to a popular breeze, have escaped from it as completely as everybody else.

There is an inelegance, a bagginess, a lack of crease about the political exterior which almost exceeds the studied *négligé* of the teaching profession. Yet there is no inherent reason why statesmanship should be perpetually down at the heels and over at the knees. It was not always so; and in the days when it was not, one cannot help feeling that its political practice was a good deal better. The great days of English politics seem to fall in the half century between the Battle of Waterloo and the death of Lord Palmerston. That was an age when a party leader was at least as well known in the country as a popular jockey; and it is permissible to add that in almost every case he dressed better than a successful actor. Perhaps Mr. Disraeli went a little too far. But the general standard of the political exterior was admirably high. The towering wings of Sir Robert Peel's collar, the dye on Lord Palmerston's whiskers,

the elegance of Sir John Pakington's riding costume (he habitually wore spurs in Cabinet), even the more recent splendours of Mr. Gladstone's tea-rose—every one of these is the mark of an age when the politicians had style. Public business could be modishly conducted by gentlemen, and the people of England regarded them with that respect which is always reserved for fashion.

That is why one welcomes the recurrent rescue of old letters from obscurity. They are often lacking in serious political significance, but how amusing from the social angle. The doors of forgotten drawing-rooms swing slowly open; and one seems to see the grave, corseted forms of Victorian statesmen conversing elegantly with one another upon the Condition of the People, or turning aside between whiles to drop a *mot* for the appreciative simpers of their ladies. One writer has a delightful vision of the Whig hostesses "billowing, sailing, gliding in their hoops and crinolines, their scarves falling from white shoulders, their great bonnets sometimes framing, sometimes hiding, their faces with the little bunches of curls at each side, or the severe and glossy bandeaux and loops hiding their ears."

One is past the powdered magnificence of the Eighteenth Century. Even "the old Whig dress, a blue coat with brass buttons and a buff waistcoat,"

seemed a trifle odd. But it was still an age of rouge and chandeliers, when ministers rode down to their offices on horseback and manly sport vied with female accomplishment in the great country houses, where the real rulers of England reigned. A career in those days was like the Imperial migrations from the Tuileries to Compiègne and from Compiègne to Fontainebleau and from Fontainebleau to Biarritz. Elizabeth Lamb opened, among her native Melbournes, at Brocket; as Lady Cowper she kept house at Panshanger; and when she married Palmerston, she moved on to Broadlands. It was a grave, delightful business to be a Whig princess.

In her earlier phases, when George IV. was king, there was still a strong strain of native coarseness, even in the manners of the great world. One never quite knew what the gentlemen were up to downstairs in the dining-room; and a faint flavour of the taproom still hung about their recreations. A young lady could report to her brother, with genteel underlinings, that

> Papa hates London and sighs for Brighton. How people change! Altho' he *never* exceeds Tierney's prescription and only drinks one glass of Negus, he manages *somehow or other to be drunkish.* I suppose it must be the fog that makes him so.

A daughter's piety, it seems, was less scandalised by Papa's intoxication than by the inadequacy of the cause.

Yet there is a strange modernity about the domestic predicaments of Lady Caroline Lamb (they called her "Cherubina" in the family):

> The Servants at Brocket still continue to pass thro like the figures in a Magic Lanthorn—they come on and go off—a new Cook whom Hagard was all expectation to see from her great character and her fifty Guinea wages staid, I believe, only one week. Dear Hagard is worth his weight in gold. These are pearls thrown to Swine, such a pair of Jewels as Hagard and Dawson! Hagard's philosophy talking of Caroline is so good. He says she can't be any worse, so one hopes she may get better.

One can well imagine that a lady, who managed to scare Byron into hostility to the sex, was an imperfect housekeeper.

On the political side, Lady Palmerston's correspondence with her brother is of more tepid interest. Frederick Lamb's activities were exclusively diplomatic; and it is not always easy to recover the contemporary rapture over a sally of Princess Lieven or a dry aside of Prince Metternich. For a good many years, during her first marriage, the slow development of her friendship with Palmerston was the most important thing about her. His letters are always

full of genial commonplace. He writes most frequently when he is on the Continent; and one likes to think of him strolling about in the sunshine and despising the foreigners. There is a strange encounter on the cobblestones of Boulogne in 1821, when he met a little boy—"a lying little dog"—singing a song that must have lingered on from the wars of the First Empire:

Bientôt plus de Guerre!
Tous les Rois sont morts.
Il n'y a que l' Angleterre
Qui résiste encore.
Tiggi riggi Dong Dong La Beauté
Tiggi riggi Dong Dong ah c'est beau!

That rather hoarse chorus has the quality that one associates with one of Du Maurier's dreadful dream-*gamins;* and one can picture the big Englishman in whiskers watching the little prancing figure (he was eight years old) ingeminating his *Tiggi riggi Dong Dong* in the September sunshine of 1821.

A stranger phenomenon, perhaps, is Lord Palmerston attending the solemn lectures of M. Guizot in Paris. Grave gentlemen discoursed to him "upon the Early History of Civilisation in Europe, upon the Progress and Origin of European Languages, and upon the State of the Mechanical Arts and Industry of the Civilised World." But he continued to

take considerably more interest in "a new Opera of Caraffa from *The Bride of Lammermuir*" and the constitutional inability of Frenchmen to be black-balled for clubs with gentlemanly reticence. The July revolution of 1830 elicited a strange cry of triumph from him:

> We shall drink the cause of Liberalism all over the world. Let Spain and Austria look to themselves; this reaction cannot end where it began, and Spain and Italy and Portugal and parts of Germany will sooner or later be affected. This event is decisive of the ascendancy of Liberal Principles throughout Europe; the evil spirit has been put down and will be trodden under foot. The reign of Metternich is over and the days of the Duke's policy might be measured by algebra, if not by arithmetic.

That is the authentic Palmerston, who put down the mighty from their seat, always provided that the mighty had committed the initial enormity of being foreigners.

At fifty-five he married Lady Cowper. His bride was fifty-two; and for twenty-six years they went bravely on together. The partnership, one might have thought, was a trifle dull; but they carried it with an air of high romance. She gave parties for him and collected young supporters or asked queer foreigners—"Cavour, is that his name?—the man we were to meet at Hathertons"—or warned her hus-

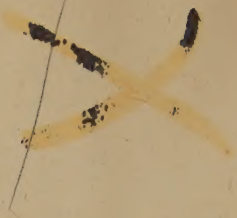
band about draughts. Sometimes she told him how to manage the Queen a little better:

> I am sure it would be better if you *said* less to her—even if you act as you think best. I often think there is too much knight errantry in your Ways. You always think you can convince people by Arguments . . . I should treat what she says more lightly and courteously, and not enter into argument with her, but lead her on gently, by letting her believe you have both the same opinions in fact and the same wishes, but take sometimes different ways of carrying them out.

Perhaps women would make the best ministers when there is a queen on the throne. But the lesson was lost on Lord Palmerston, and he still continued to distress his sovereign.

The queer old couple lived on; and one of them became the uncrowned king of mid-Victorian England, whilst the other gave great parties at Cambridge House on Saturday nights "looking so well in her diamonds." "One knows," as someone wrote, "there is a real crisis when Lady Palmerston forgets her rouge and Lord Palmerston omits to dye his whiskers"; until at last Palmerston came home ill, and there was no more rouge. The tired old hand wrote in its diary: "I was up all night. I can write no more." Palmerston went first; and Em was left waiting alone. Once she turned a faded smile to a

daughter (she was almost ninety now) and said, "I think, Fanny, I must really begin low bodies again in the evening." And at the last there was a tired old lady in a great four-post bed, in a room next the dining-room at Brocket.



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